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“Peace, Peace, but There is no Peace”

Prophetic Conflicts in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah



Francesco Arena

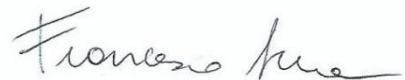
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The University of Edinburgh

2018

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francesco". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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Thesis Abstract

This work looks at a peculiar blaming of the religious class (especially, the prophets) as it appears in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. In these three books, the prophets (coupled with the priests on two occasions but only in the book of Jeremiah) are said to have promised peace (שלום) to the nation. Such promises are exposed as blatant falsehood (שקר), and the prophets who uttered them are dismissed as liars who lead the people astray from YHWH. This accusation appears with minor variations in several excerpts throughout these books (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12; 14:13–16; 23:13–32; 27–29; 37:19; Ezek 13:1–16; Mic 3:5–8). Moreover, especially in the book of Jeremiah, the reader comes across a connection between “falsehood” and the idea of “promising peace”. In the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah, the dynamics of “prophet of the book vs. other prophets” often turn up and seem to be intertwined with the motif of having promised a false peace. Hence, this study aims to explain the reasons behind such peculiar allegations, which are presented as prophetic conflicts.

The terms often used to express these conflicts, in the tradition and in scholarship, are “true” prophets vs. “false” prophets. These labels are however ambiguous, since an analysis of all the passages mentioned above does not appear to delineate the so-called “false” prophets as a homogenous group, who is antagonistic towards the “true” prophets of the tradition. It seems that the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah originally presented an anti-prophetic attitude, thus accusing *all* the prophets, and only later new readings (supported by redactional interventions) emphasized the prophetic role bestowed upon their main characters (the prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah), thereby generating an interpretation that favours the division of the prophetic class into legitimate and illegitimate members. Consequently, as this work argues, prophetic conflicts are literary creations of some later redactors of the books and are always aimed at backing up their ideological stances.

In addition, while analysing the false promises of peace, the present thesis also covers the literary growth and transmission of this theme in the books of Jeremiah (where it seems to originate from), Ezekiel and Micah (where it appears to be secondary and modelled on Jeremiah). Although prophetic conflicts are expression of the ideology of the redactors, such ideology is the product of a cultural and historical environment that at some point during the history of Israel produced this strand of thought within the biblical prophetic tradition. Hence, this research acknowledges that the biblical texts, although not providing any reliable historical reconstruction (because the redactors were not historians by any means), still allow the biblical scholar to attempt to recreate the historical moment and context that may have given birth to the ideology which lay behind prophetic conflicts (and the theme of the “false” prophets), and to trace its historical and literary development in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah.

Lay Summary

This work analyses how prophets are considered in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah, especially in relation to a peculiar accusation directed at them, namely, that they had promised false peace to a people that found itself on the verge of disaster.

This accusation appears widely in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12; 14:13–16; 23:13–32; 27–29; 37:19) and once in Ezekiel and Micah (Ezek 13:1–16; Mic 3:5–8). Blaming the prophets in prophetic books has often been considered by biblical scholars as proof of a historical conflict between the good prophets of the tradition (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah) and other prophets who instead were only interested in their personal gain. This latter group is generally labelled as that of the “false prophets”. Hence, in these terms, prophetic conflicts are considered a social phenomenon and an integral part of the development of the religion of ancient Israel.

However, the historicity of prophetic literature being debatable, it is argued in this research that the accusation aimed at the prophetic class is part of the literary creations of redactors who were active centuries after the supposed times of Jeremiah (sixth century BCE), Ezekiel (sixth century) and Micah (eighth century) to promote their ideology by using the prestige of prominent figures of the biblical tradition. The aim of this work is to trace the literary development of the motif of promising false peace in one book (Jeremiah) and to show how it was inserted in later books (Ezekiel and Micah). Prophetic conflicts cannot be taken as an expression of a social phenomenon but are literary creations, which were inserted to support the positions of the later editors of these three prophetic books.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABC	<i>Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles</i> . A. K. Grayson. TCS 5. Locust Valley, New York: J. J. Augustin, 1975.
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ABL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AIL	Ancient Israel and its Literature
AJS	American Journal of Semiotics
<i>Ant. Iud.</i>	Josephus Flavius' <i>Antiquitates Iudaice</i>
ASTI	Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BL	Bible and Liberation
BS	The Biblical Seminar
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CIS	Copenhagen International Seminar
CSHB	Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible

CurBS	Currents in Research: Biblical Studies
EBib	Etudes Bibliques
ETL	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FZB	Forschung zur Bibel
G	<i>Septuagint</i>
GCS	Goucher College Series
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> . Ed. by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arthur E. Cowley. 2 nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910.
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HeBAI	Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel
Hen	Henoch
<i>Hist.</i>	Herodotus' <i>Historiae</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JD	Jews and other Differences
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements Series
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew/Old Testament Studies
MT	Masoretic Text
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NCI	The New Critical Idiom
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis

OTL	Old Testament Library Commentary Series
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PSBL	Proceedings from the Society of Biblical Literature
RdQ	Revue de Qumrân
SBL	Studies in Biblical Literature Series (Society of Biblical Literature)
SBLDS	Dissertation Series (Society of Biblical Literature)
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJOT	Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament
SJSJ	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
SLS	Studies in Language Series
SOTI	Studies in Old Testament Interpretation
Syr	Peshitta
T	Targum
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
V	Jerome's <i>Vulgate</i>
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTs	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	World Biblical Commentaries
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZSystTh	Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie

Chapter 1

False Promises of Peace: Assessing the Problem

1. Of Peace and Falsehood

This study looks at a peculiar form of blaming the religious class as it appears in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. In these three books, the prophets (coupled with priests on two occasions but only in the book of Jeremiah) are accused of having promised peace (שלום) to the nation. This promise is exposed as being a blatant falsehood (שקר), and the prophets who uttered it are dismissed as liars who lead the people astray from YHWH. This accusation appears with minor variations in several texts throughout the books. Moreover, especially in the book of Jeremiah, the reader finds a connection between “falsehood” and the idea of “promising peace”. The present study aims to explore this *motif*, to explain the reasons for such peculiar allegations and to investigate the textual relations between these three prophetic books.

As the short paragraph above makes clear, this is a study about prophecy and prophetic literature in the biblical context. “Prophet” is used here to render a specific Hebrew term, namely נביא, although also other words are used in the Bible to refer to the broader class of diviners.¹ It is interesting to notice that נביא is also the designation given to the so-called “writing” prophets;² and that *Nevi'im* is also the Hebrew title for that part of the *Tanakh* that goes from the book of Joshua to the book of Malachi.³ Nevertheless, it seems that although

¹ For a list and a detailed examination of the Hebrew terms referring to prophetic gifts and divination in the Bible, see David L. Petersen, *The Prophetic Literature: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 5-8; Reinhardt G. Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel* (trans. by Anselm C. Hagedorn and Nathan MacDonald. CSHB 2; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 19-20. For a thorough analysis of the roles of religious officials in ancient Israel, including “prophets/נביאים”, see Lester L. Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages: A Socio-Historical Study of Religious Specialists in Ancient Israel* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 66-118.

² The “writing” prophets are those figures to whom the tradition ascribes the composition of the prophetic books. They are divided, according to the length of their work, into three Major (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and twelve Minor (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) prophets.

³ This is not an element to be overlooked; we should consider that the redaction of prophetic books at some point accompanied the redaction of an entire section of the Hebrew Bible. This raises questions as to the textual

they are “prophets” themselves, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah were ruthlessly outspoken in their criticism of their own cultic class.

The book of Jeremiah frequently mentions prophets, either singly (Jer 5:13; 7:25; 14:13–15; 23:9–40; 25:4; 26:5; 27:14–22; 35:15; 37:19; 44:4), or with the priests (Jer 2:8; 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 14:18; 18:18), or with other groups of foretellers (Jer 27:9–10; 29: 8–9) or with the king, the people and other leaders of the community who represent the whole society (Jer 2:26–30; 4:9; 8:1–3; 13:13; 26:6–11, 16; 32:32).⁴ Prophets are considered positively only in five passages, which all use a stereotypical imagery, namely, YHWH has sent his servants the prophets (אשלח אליכם את כל עבדי הנביאים), but the people have ignored them and refused to repent (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 35:15 and 44:4). Conversely, most of what is said of the prophets in Jeremiah is negative. In addition to their constant plotting to kill Jeremiah (Jer 18:18; 26:6–11), the prophets are accused of idolatry (Jer 2:8, 26; 23:13), adultery (Jer 23:14–15; 29:23) apostasy (Jer 23:11), vanity (Jer 5:13) and above all, falsehood (Jer 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 14:13–15; 27:10, 14; 28:15; 29:9, 21). Moreover, with regard to falsehood, the prophets (sometimes coupled with the priests) are accused of having promised peace to the people, at a moment in the nations’ history when peace was not possible (Jer 6:14; 8:11; 14:13).

When compared with the book of Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel is less concerned with prophets and prophetic gifts. The prophetic class is rarely mentioned (Ezek 13; 14:1–9; 22:28; 38:17), but as in the book of Jeremiah even on these limited occasions a generally hostile attitude is registered. Although Ezek 12:21–28 defends the importance of visions as a means of truthful divination, Ezek 14:7–9 admits that YHWH may deceive his own prophets and cause them to speak in favour of other deities (idolatry is the main theme in Ezek 14:1–9), and Ezek 22:28 accuses the prophets of having had false visions and of proclaiming dishonest divination. Moreover, the entirety of Ezek 13 comprises oracles against prophets (Ezek 13:1–16) and then focuses on women prophets (Ezek 13:17–23) who communicated empty visions to the people,

relations between prophetic books and the formation of the canon, as Clements remarks; see Ronald E. Clements, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 10.

⁴ When it comes to the role of priests and prophets in the book of Jeremiah, scholars tend to consider similar selections of texts. In his classic study as regards the theological meaning of the term “falsehood” (שקר) in Jeremiah, Overholt works with Jer 5:12–13; 6:13–15; 8:10–12; 23:9–40; 27–29; see Thomas Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood* (SBT Second Series 16; London: SCM Press, 1970). When analysing the attitudes towards the priests and the temple in Jeremiah, Tiemeyer examines Jer 2:8, 26–28; 4:9; 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; 14:18; 18:18; 23:11, 33–40; see Lena S. Tiemeyer, “The Priests and the Temple Cult in the Book of Jeremiah”, in Hans M. Barstad & Reinhardt G. Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW 388, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 233–64.

leading them astray from YHWH. Interestingly enough, one of the pivotal accusations against the prophets in Ezek 13 is that they promised peace when there was no peace (Ezek 13:10).

Furthermore, the book of Micah only mentions prophets in ch. 3 (Mic 3:5, 11), and presents them in quite a negative light. Along with other leaders of the community (namely, judges and priests), the prophets are firstly blamed for practising divination for money (Mic 3:11) and then are held responsible for the demise of Jerusalem, that will be “ploughed like a field” (Mic 3:12). Besides, in Mic 3:5, the prophets are also accused of being greedy, which prompts them to promise peace to whoever gives them something to eat.

This brief overview is useful to narrow down the subject of this research. Three main aspects were considered in order to produce the selection of texts. The first one is the mention of “peace” and “falsehood”; these are two key-elements that point to promises of peace that will not be fulfilled (the ones that are here considered are, in fact, “false” promises of peace). The second one is represented by the active role of “other” prophets; the false promises of peace must not be uttered by the protagonists of the prophetic books. Finally, the third and last aspect pertains to the relations between the texts, and thus it considers recurring terminology and concepts (the words vision, divination, dream, and the fact that “peace” is, in the heart of these prophets, YHWH’s message to his people, just to name a few). The purpose of this study is to deal exclusively with texts that may have drawn from the same source material and to highlight the development of a literary motif.

Therefore, this investigation knowingly excludes several passages about promises of peace in prophetic books. For instance, Isa 9:1–6 represents one of the most famous promises of peace in the Bible. However, this passage does not present the possibility of a false promise of peace; on the contrary, it overflows with optimism, joy and hope for the people. Moreover, Isa 9:1–6 seems to present words that are spoken by Isaiah himself, and it does not show any of the textual links that are highlighted in many passages about false peace in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. For the same reasons, also other passages that introduce promises of peace, such as Isa 26:3, 12; 32:17–18; 38:17; 54:10; 57:18–21; Nah 1:15; Hag 2:9; Zech 8:12–19 are not analysed in the current research.⁵ In fact, the main purpose of this study is not an analysis of promises

⁵ The case of Zech 8 however cannot be dismissed without further clarification. In this passage, both the terms peace and falsehood appear, but they are not in juxtaposition, which means that they do not introduce a false promise of peace. The term peace is used in Zech 8:12, 16 and 19 to present the deliverance of Judah and Israel, while the term falsehood recurs in v.17 within a warning against believing in false oaths. Another reason to exclude these verses is that they do not highlight the role of the prophetic class.

of peace that the prophets of the tradition (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Zechariah and the others) have uttered, but rather to address the false promises of peace that have been delivered by other – less virtuous – members of the religious class.

As regards this element, the depiction of the prophetic class is of the utmost importance for this research, and it seems that two elements connect the passages that have been chosen from the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. Firstly, the passages that have been chosen in these three books present quite an unsympathetic attitude towards those who bear the title of נביא. Secondly, they contain the same accusation aimed at the prophetic class, namely that the prophets have spread a false sense of security in the nation, mostly by promising שלום, “peace”. These two elements have often been taken in consideration in the wider context of the opposition between “true” prophets and “false” prophets; the assumption is simply that in ancient Israel there were good prophets who were working for the sake of the people, and there were bad ones, who, on the other hand, were mostly interested in achieving personal gain. These two groups were always at loggerheads. The evaluation of these dynamics will be crucial in the following of this study, and thus needs further clarification.

When it comes to the depiction of the prophetic class, there are clearly two shared elements in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. Firstly, the passages in these three books present quite an unsympathetic attitude towards those who bear the title of נביא. Secondly, they contain the same accusation aimed at the prophetic class, namely that the prophets have spread a false sense of security in the nation, mostly by promising שלום, “peace”. These two elements have often been taken in consideration in the wider context of the opposition between “true” prophets and “false” prophets; the assumption is simply that in ancient Israel there were good prophets who were working for the sake of the people, and there were bad ones, who, on the other hand, were mostly interested in achieving personal gain. These two groups were always at loggerheads. The evaluation of these dynamics will be crucial in the following of this study, and thus needs further clarification.

2. Trusting Divination (Deut 13:1–5; 18:18–22)

When it comes to diviners (seen as mediators of the will of the gods),⁶ the Hebrew Bible deals in some detail with which of them are legitimate and which of them instead should not be trusted by the people. As regards this, the problem is addressed on two different levels, the first of which pertains to the techniques that a diviner uses. As stated above, the class of the **נבאים** represents only one expression of divination, as the Hebrew Bible introduces several groups of professional mediators, such as soothsayers, sorcerers, dream-interpreters, fortune-tellers, necromancers, and diviners.⁷ The Mosaic and Priestly laws prohibit all these forms of divination (Lev 19:26–31; 20:6; Deut 18:9–14).⁸ The only technique that normally appears to be legitimate is that represented by the verb **נבא**, “to prophesy”; thus, to some extent, those who resort to using forbidden *media* of divination should not be followed, while “prophecy” is always a legitimate *medium* which connects the human and the divine.

Nonetheless, in the Bible, not even prophets (as in the Hebrew **נבאים**) are always to be trusted, which leads to the issue of how the people are supposed to know if a prophet and his message are legitimate or not. Outside prophetic literature, this element is addressed in Deut 13:1–5 and Deut 18:18–22. The text of Deut 13:1–5 reads as follows,

1 If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, 2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he said to you in these terms, “Let us now follow foreign gods” – which you have not known – “and let us serve them”, 3 do not listen to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, because YHWH your god is testing you to know if you love YHWH your god with all your heart and soul. 4 You shall follow YHWH your god and fear him, you shall listen

⁶ With reference to divination as human-divine communication, and prophecy as a form of divination, a thorough analysis is found in Martti Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy: Near Eastern, Biblical, and Greek Perspectives* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2017), 4-54.

⁷ The biblical tradition does not clearly trace boundaries between each of these groups. We may assume that each of these professional techniques of divination had its own specificity, but the Bible is often more peremptory, grouping all of them together as dangerous sorcery that should be avoided, mostly because they represent foreign practices. However, some overlapping should be assumed (e.g. 1 Sam 9:9). For further details, see Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McKlean, “Magic (OT)”, in ABD 4, 468-69; Nissinen, *Ancient Prophecy*, 30-31.

⁸ Besides under the Mosaic law, necromancy was banned by Saul, although we come to know about this only because the king himself at some point resolves to break his own rule and asks a necromancer to summon the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam 28:3–25). Similarly, although being sometimes attacked as illegitimate sources of foreseeing (Jer 23:25–29), dreams are more often considered as rightful means of communication with YHWH (e.g. Gen 28:10–22; Gen 41:25–31). The Hebrew Bible has evidently a more ambivalent attitude towards most of these practices than it may appear from the reading of Leviticus and Deuteronomy; see Kuemmerlin-McKlean, “Magic (OT)”, 469.

his voice and serve him, and hold fast to him. 5 And that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken to make you turn away from YHWH your god, who brought you out of Egypt and delivered you from the house of the slaves, to guide you on the path that YHWH your god command you to walk. Thus, you will eradicate evil from your midst.

In this passage, any prophet (נביא) who speaks on the behalf of gods other than YHWH is deceiving the people and shall be put to death. Hence, not surprisingly, the first requirement to be taken seriously as a prophet is to be a *Yahwistic prophet* (the diatribe between Elijah and the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, in 1 Kgs 18:20–44, offers a good example). This, however, still does not resolve the matter. In fact, not even all the prophets who speak in the name of YHWH can be believed. This issue is addressed directly in the Deut 18:18–22, which represents one of the most exhaustive treatments of the issue of legitimacy of prophets and prophecy in the Bible. The passage reads as follows,

18 A prophet I shall raise up for them among their brothers, like you,⁹ and shall put my words on his lips, so that he shall speak to them all I command. 19 And if one will not listen to my words, which he speaks in my name, I shall hold him accountable for it. 20 But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet will die. 21 And if you say in your heart, “How shall we know the word that YHWH has not spoken?” 22 When a prophet speaks in the name of YHWH, if the prediction does not happen or come to pass, that is a prediction that YHWH has not spoken; the prophet has spoken in presumption and you shall not be afraid of him.

This text presents a very clear depiction of what a legitimate prophet should be and do, and, conversely, what an illegitimate one generally does. Moses is the model for the legitimate prophet. Like Moses, he shall speak only the words that YHWH puts in his mouth and, because he is endorsed with YHWH’s authority, he is authorized to speak in his name.¹⁰ On the contrary, the illegitimate prophet, aside from being associated with idolatry, is identified as one who will only speak his own message and misuse the name of YHWH. Finally, the coming to

⁹ The reference is to Moses (Deut 18:15).

¹⁰ This is the interpretation given by Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 262 and Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBC 4; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 217–18. Brueggemann, however, considers the reference to Moses as the sign that every “true” prophet should act as a mediator of the covenant who is responsible for keeping the people loyal to it; see Walter Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 192.

pass of what is foretold should be able to settle any arguments as to the legitimacy of a prophetic word (Deut 18:22). At first, this may seem a reasonable way to tell truthful prophets apart from liars; however, this “wait and see” attitude presents some insurmountable difficulties which makes this criterion impractical.

Firstly, fulfilment is only interpreted *negatively* in Deut 18:22, which means that, although it can prove a prophet to be “false”, a fulfilled prophecy does not, *ipso facto*, prove that a prophet is “true” (Deut 13:1–5).¹¹ In addition, this criterion focuses exclusively on the predictive element of prophecy, which, however, would apply only to a small minority of the prophetic oracles found in the Bible. In fact, as per the tradition, prophets mostly criticized the community for their sins, presenting within their messages warnings and threats to make the people repent, and were not simply predictors of the future.¹² Hence, the ability to foresee distant events appears to be a neglectable trait in establishing the authenticity of the prophetic gifts.¹³

Likewise, even when the sayings of the prophets are predictive, they are often extremely general, vaguely foreseeing, on one hand, war, famine, disaster and pestilence; on the other, prosperity and fertility. Besides, given their vague nature, prophecies are often open to interpretation.¹⁴ This complicates the matter of identifying their fulfilment, because it can only be recognized in retrospective.¹⁵ Similarly, prophetic words are often conditional and predict a certain outcome (divine punishment or deliverance) only when the characters involved resolve to adhere or not to a certain type of behaviour (e.g. Gen 20:7; Deut 15:4–6, 28:1–9; 1 Sam 7:3, 12:25; 1 Kgs 3:14, 6:12, 11:38; Isa 1:18–20; Jer 12:14–17). In such cases, the predictive nature of prophecy is absent, because whatever the expectations for the future are, they will always

¹¹ Wright, who acknowledges the problems in the prediction-fulfilment matter, states that the only reliable sign of a “true” prophet, in Deuteronomistic terms, is to be “like Moses”; see Wright, *Deuteronomy*, 218.

¹² Brueggemann is right in stating that the emphasis on the ability to foresee is anomalous, as generally, in Deuteronomy, the role of a prophet is that of preserving the covenant and following YHWH; see Brueggemann, *Deuteronomy*, 195.

¹³ As Carroll rightly points out, this element is connected to the conviction that YHWH knows the future and thus can communicate it to his servants, which is part of the ideology of the Deuteronomists, who see history as the unfolding of the prophetic word; see Robert P. Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed: Reactions and Responses to Failure in the Old Testament Prophetic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 29.

¹⁴ As observed by Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, 36; Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflicts: Its Effect upon Israelite Religion* (BZAW 124; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 50-1. In this regard, one should consider that the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem may be fulfilled either by Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of the city (587 BCE) or Titus’ (70 CE).

¹⁵ Given the generalised nature of the language of predictive texts, Carroll provocatively summarizes their content in, “there will be a period of destruction or there will be a period of well-being”, in Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, 35. The prophet Jeremiah’s doom oracles speak of war, famine, sword, and of an enemy from the North. Only in the second part of the book is this threat identified with the Babylonian empire; see Section 2 in ch. 2.

be subject to human actions and cannot be falsified.¹⁶ Finally, there are prophecies that apply to distant times from that of the utterance (e.g. Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years of exile in Jer 29:10–14), which evidently affects the fulfilment criterion, because a prophet could not have based his credibility on words that none of his contemporaries could have realistically hoped to see fulfilled. It seems clear that the legitimacy of a prophet, in the terms expressed by Deuteronomy, is a literary matter, and not a practical one. Its criteria are expression of a theological reflection of YHWH's role in the history of Israel and do not represent a collection of objective instructions that would help the people to distinguish between good and bad prophets.

However, as said above, the Hebrew Bible quite often presents dynamics of prophetic conflict, in which a good prophet, who is loyal to YHWH, is called on to oppose dishonest prophets, who claim to be entitled to speak in the name of the deity. In such cases, fulfilment appears as the decisive element to establish the legitimacy of prophetic words. The story of Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22 is exemplary of this attitude. This text does not present the legalistic tone of Deuteronomy but articulates similar points in a narrative. The context is that of a military campaign that the kings of Israel and Judah, Ahab and Jehoshaphat, wish to undertake against Aram (1 Kgs 22:2–4). The two kings have received favourable omens from all the four hundred court prophets they consult (1 Kgs 22:6, 11–12), but Micaiah, the son of Imlah, an independent prophet who is not connected to the royal palace (1 Kgs 22:8), dares to contradict their predictions, and claims he has received quite a different message from YHWH (1 Kgs 22:17). When confronted by the king of Israel, whose death he foresaw in battle, Micaiah declares that YHWH has deliberately deceived the court prophets, by putting a lying spirit (רוח שקר) into their mouths (1 Kgs 22:20–22). He then states that, were the king of Israel to come back safely after the battle, then he would not speak the word of YHWH (1 Kgs 22:28). The story of Micaiah implies that only the fulfilment of a prophecy establishes if the message came from YHWH. Since the king of Israel did die in battle (1 Kgs 22:35), the legitimacy of Micaiah's prophetic gift is sanctioned.

The terms of the conflict of prophet vs. prophet are often expressed, in the tradition and in scholarship, as “true” prophets vs. “false” prophets. These labels are however ambiguous, because, as we have seen, even the prophet who tells the truth at times should be ignored by the people (Deut 13:2–4). In a similar way, not all the prophets that are unreliable are “false”,

¹⁶ As explained by Carroll, “Ancient Israelite Prophecy and Dissonance Theory”, *Numen* 24 (1977), 142.

as they may not be lying or pretending to be prophets but may rather be resorting to forbidden techniques of divination (Deut 18:9–14). Besides, within the Masoretic text, the expression “false prophet” never occurs, while it is used only in the Greek version of the book of Jeremiah (ψευδοπροφήτης). Therefore, some precautions must be taken when using expressions such as “false” prophets and “false” prophecy, because they do not refer to any prophetic group which has defined and homogeneous characteristics but rather point to the ideology of some redactors. Similarly, prophetic conflicts in the Bible for the most part present the traits of literary constructions and are not historical witnesses of socio-historical phenomena of ancient Israel. Given that, in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah, the dynamics of prophets of the book vs. other prophets often arise, and they seem to be intertwined with the motif of having promised a false peace. Due to some radical changes in the trajectory of studies on biblical prophecies, a new analysis of this motif is needed, to gain new insights into the standings of the prophetic conflict and into its historical and literary development within the prophetic tradition.

3. Prophetic Conflicts as Ideological Conflicts

The dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets has received considerable attention from the guild of Biblical Studies over the years. Although scholars have often been sceptical about the validity of the criteria set out in Deuteronomy to separate “true” and “false” prophets,¹⁷ they have rarely questioned the assumption that, within the Hebrew Bible, some prophets were intrinsically virtuous, while others were irremediably corrupt. An ongoing prophetic conflict has long been considered an integral part of the religious development of Yahwism in ancient Israel to which the biblical texts bear witness. Therefore, scholars have developed different arguments and explanations to account for prophetic conflicts.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Johannes Hempel, “Vom irrenden Glauben”, *ZSystTh* 7 (1930), 631-60, who already questioned the validity of these criteria. The article was later reprinted in Hempel, *Apoxysmata: Vorarbeiten zu Einer Religion Geschichte und Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1961), 174-97.

¹⁸ The short list of scholarly works that follows is not exhaustive by any means but is intended to delineate the trajectory in the studies on “false” prophecy and prophetic conflicts, and to highlight the major positions expressed up to the present day. For an exhaustive assessment of the discussion up to the late ‘60s, see Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 13-22.

In his article “Die falschen Propheten” (1933),¹⁹ Gerhard von Rad argues that the “false” prophets who have fiercely antagonized the legitimate prophets (e.g. Micaiah in 1 Kgs 22 and Jeremiah *passim*) were the cultic prophets who were connected to the temple and the royal palace. These cultic officials had so much confidence in YHWH’s election of the Israelites that they did not even bother to make the people repent from their evil so as to avoid divine judgement, but simply promised to the nation that the future of Judah would be bright no matter what (e.g. Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16).²⁰ Von Rad also assumes that proof that the opponents of Jeremiah belonged to the establishment is found in their concern with the temple (they promise that peace will come במקום הזה, “in this place”, allegedly the temple, in Jer 14:13) and in the return of the temple vessels (Jer 27:16–22).²¹ Similar positions have later been taken up by Thomas Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood* (1970), who considers that the accusations of falsehood in Jeremiah mainly point to the false sense of security which was spread throughout the nation by those prophets who considered the temple an enduring sign of national security.²²

Conversely, in his *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (1962),²³ Johannes Lindblom opposes the identification of the “false” prophets with the temple personnel, especially because some of them are clearly not attached to any sanctuaries (e.g. the “daughters of your people” in Ezek 13:17–23). Lindblom takes at face value the definitions of illegitimate prophecy given by Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and he states that the “false” prophets, although entitled to prophesy, have never been commissioned by YHWH, so their words of peace and well-being had no chances of coming true.²⁴ At the same time, he considers that “true” prophets were not interested in providing a precise characterization of “false” prophecy, because they were sure that their call was genuine, while that of their opponents was not.²⁵

Many other scholars have reverted to an argument that we may label as “faith”, by rejecting, as Lindblom did, the socio-religious dichotomy between temple and peripheral prophets. Eva Osswald’s *Falsche Prophetie im Alten Testament* (1962)²⁶ dismisses the idea that an objective criterion of differentiation is traceable, and she considers the distinction between prophetic messages a matter of faith for the people. Osswald acknowledges that a “true” prophet is the

¹⁹ See Gerhard von Rad, “Die falsche Propheten”, ZAW 51 (1933), 109-20.

²⁰ See von Rad, “Die falsche Propheten”, 112.

²¹ See von Rad, “Die falsche Propheten”, 114.

²² See Overholt, *Falsehood*, 4-5.

²³ See Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962).

²⁴ See Lindblom, *Prophecy*, 211-12.

²⁵ See Lindblom, *Prophecy*, 214.

²⁶ See Eva Osswald, *Falsche Prophetie im Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1962).

one who manages to understand the historical moment of his nation, so that only he can interpret YHWH's will and instruct the people accordingly.²⁷ Like Osswald, Hans Joachim Kraus' study of the book of Jeremiah, *Prophetie in der Krisis* (1964),²⁸ resolves the problem of legitimacy by assuming that the closeness to YHWH is the essential requirement for "true" prophecy. Kraus explains his hypothesis in his analysis of Micaiah's confrontation with the court prophets in 1 Kgs 22.²⁹ Various sources enable cultic specialists and prophets to understand YHWH's will, but what really guarantees their reliability is the proximity of the intermediary to the deity. In the episode of 1 Kgs 22, Micaiah receives his message directly from YHWH, while the court prophets received a false vision from a subordinate spirit.³⁰

A different point of view is expressed in James L. Crenshaw's *Prophetic Conflict* (1971). In his study, Crenshaw looks at the dynamics of the opposition between prophets as it appears in the biblical texts and tries to place it in the context of the development of the religion of ancient Israel. It is Crenshaw's opinion that the call to prophesy created concurrently the opportunity for the development of "false" prophets and "false" prophecy.³¹ On the one hand, to gain the favour of the people, many prophets ignored their call to urge repentance in the nation but rather reassured the people to gain their favour. On the other, it is part of the biblical tradition that YHWH himself may tempt the prophets with false visions to test Israel's fidelity.³² Thus, the conflict between prophets appears inevitable and to some extent may even be considered part of YHWH's plan for Israel. Based on this, Crenshaw argues that after the return from the exile the Israelites had to accept that it is impossible to tell reliable and unreliable diviners apart on the spot, because the accomplishment of a prophecy can be established only *after* the event.³³ Given its uncertain nature, prophecy ceased to be trusted as it was unable to clarify doubts and to respond to the spiritual needs of the people. The community abandoned prophecy and turned to apocalyptic and wisdom literature as a more

²⁷ See Osswald, *Falsche Prophetie*, 22.

²⁸ See Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Prophetie in der Krisis: Studien zu Texten aus dem Buch Jeremia* (Biblische Studien 43; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1964).

²⁹ See Kraus, *Prophetie in der Krisis*, 106.

³⁰ In a similar way, Kraus also takes the episode in Num 12:6–8 to be emblematic of "true" prophecy, as Moses is said to have spoken with YHWH "face to face", and not through visions or dreams; see Kraus, *Prophetie in der Krisis*, 110.

³¹ See Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 62.

³² See Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 47–52.

³³ See Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 92–3.

consolatory form of guidance, although it maintained the veneration for the “true” prophets of the tradition.³⁴

Another study that aims to trace the origins of prophetic conflicts is Simon J. De Vries’ *Prophet against Prophet* (1978).³⁵ De Vries considers them to be peculiar to Israelite prophecy in comparison with the rest of ancient Near Eastern area and argues that they represent the cause of Israel’s and Judah’s ultimate breakdown.³⁶ To prove his point, De Vries analyses 1 Kgs 22 using different methodological approaches to Old Testament criticism (text criticism, literary analysis, form criticism, tradition history and redaction history).³⁷ He concludes that the 1 Kgs 22 is a combination of two separated narratives (the first in 1 Kgs:2b–4a, 4b, 3–9, 15–18, 26–28s, 29–35a, 36f, and the second one in vv.10–12, 19–20a, 20b–25).³⁸ This latter was originally a disputation between a prophet (Micaiah) and a king (Zedekiah), but was inserted in the former to serve a new ideology of prophet against prophet.³⁹ De Vries presents the final form of 1 Kgs 22 as evidence that at some point pre-classic prophecy became institutionalized, and could no longer direct the decisions of the monarch. Without theological guidance, political power was liberated from any sort of control and led the nation to disaster.⁴⁰ According to De Vries, when some prophets became confused as to their priorities, others felt forced to rebuke them, and the clash of these two groups was the decisive factor in the demise of the nation. The “true” prophets, de Vries concludes, are the ones that remained faithful to their call, and knew they had to follow YHWH to serve the nation’s best interests, unlike the “false” prophets, who peddled good omens only to win over the favour of kings and people.⁴¹

A new development in the analysis of prophetic conflict is given by Robert P. Carroll’s study of prophecy in the book of Jeremiah, *From Chaos to Covenant* (1981).⁴² Carroll describes the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets in the book of Jeremiah in the terms of an ideological conflict.⁴³ He argues that the figure of Jeremiah as the “true” prophet is the product

³⁴ See Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 111.

³⁵ See Simon J. De Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet: The Role of the Micaiah Narrative (I Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978).

³⁶ See De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet*, vii–viii.

³⁷ See De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet*, 25–136.

³⁸ See De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet*, 126–27.

³⁹ See De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet*, 129.

⁴⁰ See De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet*, 129.

⁴¹ See De Vries, *Prophet against Prophet*, 144–47.

⁴² See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Uses of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM Press, 1981). In *From Chaos to Covenant*, Carroll explores and develops ideas of prophetic conflicts that he already expressed, although at a seminal level, in *When Prophecy Failed*, in which he applies the social psychological theory of cognitive dissonance to biblical texts to analyse the redactors’ reaction to unfulfilled prophecies.

⁴³ See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 194.

of the Deuteronomistic redactors of the book who were not interested in determining whether prophets and prophecies could be true or false.⁴⁴ The prophetic conflicts that the redactors depict (e.g. Jeremiah vs. Hananiah, in Jer 28) are far removed from the domain of prophecy as an empiric phenomenon, nor is it their intention to undertake an indepth discussion about the difficulties and the risks inherent in the practice of foretelling.⁴⁵ These redactors witnessed the tragedy of the exile, and along with other culprits, blamed the prophets for it. The prophet Jeremiah (as the redactors depicted him) is meant to bolster the view that the exile could have been avoided if the people in Judah had followed the Deuteronomistic ideology, and so he appears as the only “true” prophet, while the other fictional characters cannot be anything but “false” by definition.⁴⁶

Carroll’s study, which has the merit of removing the focus from the “historical” prophets while pointing to the role of the redactors of the prophetic books, coincides with the emergence of new trajectories in prophetic studies, which led to a significant change of paradigm in the conception of biblical prophets. This change has obviously had repercussions for the way in which prophetic conflict is viewed. A major input in this shift is Graeme Auld’s “Prophets through the Looking Glass: Between Writings and Moses” (1983).⁴⁷ Auld offers a terminological and statistical analysis of the recurrence of the term נביא in prophetic literature, especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He concludes that, as a group, the נבאים are mostly criticized in the tradition, and that the term נביא was bestowed on the “writing” prophets only in the post-exile.⁴⁸ Auld’s thesis is that a stratification in the use of the word נביא can be traced in the redaction of the Prophets, the results of which can be clearly seen in the books of Kings.⁴⁹ At some point, most probably in the early years of the return from the exile,⁵⁰ the title נביא gained great favour and was editorially attached to the figures that are now known as the “writing” prophets. In Auld’s view (better delineated in his following works),⁵¹ the tradition of the biblical prophets represents a literary creation, although he does not negate the existence of the

⁴⁴ See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 192.

⁴⁵ See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 194.

⁴⁶ See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 195.

⁴⁷ See Graeme Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass: Between Writings and Moses”, JSOT 27 (1983), 3-23.

⁴⁸ See Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass”, 6-7, 12.

⁴⁹ Auld takes the expression נביא ליהוה, “a prophet of YHWH” in 1 Kgs 22:7 as the *terminus a quo* for the development of this re-evaluation of prophets in Kings, which sets Micaiah apart from the other prophets. Then, the term נביא has been attached to Elijah and Elisha; see Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass”, 8.

⁵⁰ See Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass”, 16.

⁵¹ See especially Auld, “Words of God and Words of Men: Prophets and Canon” in Lyle Eslinger (ed.), *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie* (SJOTSup 67, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 237-251.

prophets who initiated the books; he simply considers them poets or intellectuals, rather than professional diviners.⁵²

A few years later, Giovanni Garbini dedicates one of the chapters of his book about the ideological tradition of ancient Israel, *Storia e ideologia nell'Israele antico* (1986),⁵³ to the motif of shedding innocent blood in the Bible, an element which is connected to the practice of blood vengeance. Garbini surmises that even the religious class (especially the prophets) at some point had been accused of such practices. He states that passages such as Jer 6:13 and Ezek 22:28 are part of anti-prophetic strand, in which all the prophets are considered to be responsible of the demise of the city and of the shedding of the innocent blood of the people.⁵⁴ Likewise, he deems inconsistent the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets, because the entirety of the prophetic class was guilty, sometimes along with the priests of Jerusalem (Jer 6:13; Ezek 22:25–28).⁵⁵ However, after the exile, with the emergency of a new clergy and the need to rebuild the temple and renovate the religious institutions, the position of the priests was re-evaluated and their authority restored.⁵⁶ It was only in a later period (presumably around the second century BCE) that the Pharisees, identifying themselves as heirs to the prophetic tradition, redeemed the role of the prophets and undertook, where possible, a re-edition of the

⁵² Auld's article generated much debate. It received a positive response from Carroll, who actually expands on Auld's thesis. Carroll considers that, in the Hebrew Bible, Prophecy and Torah are in evident contrast, because the Torah focuses on one single divine message given to Moses in the past, while Prophecy presents YHWH's word for the *hic et nunc*, as it is communicated to different, legitimate prophets. It was when Torah and Prophecy reached the same level of authority that the poets and intellectuals of the past were transformed by the redactors into the “writing” prophets. Williamson however is more critical, as he points out an alleged weakness in Auld's method. According to Williamson, Auld works with statistical recurrences in isolation, while ignoring a conceptual development of the terminology employed. Auld replied to both in a final article and the entire debate was inserted in the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, n.27, following to Auld's first article in this order: Carroll, “Poets not Prophets: A Response to ‘Prophets Through the Looking Glass’”, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 25-31; H. G. M. Williamson, “A Response to Graeme Auld”, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 33-9; and Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass: A response to Robert Carroll and Hugh Williamson”, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 41-44.

⁵³ First published in Italy in 1986 (*Storia e Ideologia nell'Israele Antico*, Brescia: Paideia Editrice) Garbini's work appeared in English a few years later; see Giovanni Garbini, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel* (trans. by John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1988).

⁵⁴ In Garbini's view, the accusations against the prophets are the result of the development of a parallel strand of ideology that moves from the classic Deuteronomistic thought (the ominous fate of Israel represents the punishment deserved by faithless kings and people) to what he defines an “anti-Deuteromistic vision” in which the people represent the innocent victim of other forces. The origin of this ideology can be found at the end of the “Song of Moses” (Deut 32:1–43), which reads “he will vindicate the blood of his servants” (Deut 32:43). In the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Garbini argues, the true enemies of the innocent people have been identified in the prophets and the priests, who shed their innocent blood (see also Lam 4:13, which Garbini ascribes to the same tradition); see Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 114-15.

⁵⁵ See Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 115.

⁵⁶ See Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116.

biblical text to diminish the negative tone of the polemic against the prophets.⁵⁷ Although at least part of Garbini's argument is not well supported (e.g. the late dating of the re-edition of the biblical passages and its Pharisaic origin), he reached the same conclusions as Auld with regard to an original negative view of the role of נביא in biblical books, followed by its subsequent redemption.⁵⁸

Later, in the '90s, Overholt took up the subject again with an article titled, "Prophecy in History: The Social Reality of Intermediation" (1990).⁵⁹ Overholt presented a critique of Auld's and Carroll's "challenging"⁶⁰ approaches to prophetic literature, receiving two responses,⁶¹ to which he gave a short rejoinder.⁶² A few years later, following on from that second debate, Hans M. Barstad revised the issue again, in his article "No Prophets?" (1993).⁶³ Barstad is fundamentally in agreement with the sceptical views expressed by Auld and Carroll, and accepts that the prophetic tradition is the result of massive redaction and belongs to later times than those presupposed by the books themselves.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, he questions the assumption (expressed more by Carroll than Auld)⁶⁵ that the prophetic tradition of the Bible

⁵⁷ As an example of the Pharisaic re-edition of the prophets, Garbini cites Jer 2:30 as it appears in G and MT. In the earlier tradition of G, the prophets, along with the people, are victims of the vengeance of YHWH, "In vain I punished your people; they did not respond to correction. A sword (μάχαιρα) devoured your prophets as a ravening lion". However, the MT has been changed to present the prophets as the innocent victims of the people, "In vain I punished your people; they did not respond to correction. Your sword (חרבכם) devoured your prophets, as a ravening lion"; see Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116-17.

⁵⁸ In 1990, Catastini reprised and implemented Garbini's work, integrating his views with Auld's hypothesis, in Alessandro Catastini, *Profeti e Tradizione* (Seminari di Orientalistica; Pisa: Giardini ed., 1990). Catastini analyses the attitude towards the prophets expressed in the entirety of the prophetic corpus (excluding Jeremiah and Ezekiel, which he deems had already been treated exhaustively by Auld and Garbini), and finds confirmation of a pre-existent, negative depiction of the prophetic class, modified only in a subsequent stage of redaction, which reinforces the previous positions; see Catastini, *Profeti e Tradizione*, 41-60. Similarly, Gonçalves has recently provided a new terminological analysis of vocabulary connected to "prophecy" that supports Auld's conclusions that the writing prophets have not been נבאים until the 6th century at the earliest; see Francolino J. Gonçalves, "Les 'prophètes écrivains' étaient-ils des נבאים?", in P. M. Michèle Daviau *et alii* (eds.), *The World of the Arameans: Volume 1* (JSOTSup 324; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 144-85.

⁵⁹ See Overholt, "Prophecy in History: The Social Reality of Intermediation", JSOT 48 (1990), 3-29.

⁶⁰ "I found the original studies of Auld (1983a, 1984) and Carroll (1983) challenging in the best sense of that word", in Overholt, "It is Difficult to Read", JSOT 48 (1990), 51.

⁶¹ See Auld, "Prophecy in Books: A Rejoinder", JSOT 48 (1990), 31-32; Carroll, "Whose Prophet? Whose Society? Whose Social Reality? Troubling the Interpretative Community Again: Notes Towards a Response to T. W. Overholt's Critique", JSOT 48 (1990), 33-49.

⁶² See Overholt, "It is Difficult to Read", JSOT 48 (1990), 51-4.

⁶³ See Barstad, "No Prophets? Recent Developments in Biblical Prophetic Research and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy", JSOT 57 (1993), 39-60.

⁶⁴ See Barstad, "No Prophets?", 44.

⁶⁵ Carroll considers the book of Jeremiah to be a post-exilic creation and holds that the Hebrew Bible does not represent a reliable source to reconstruct the socio-historical environment of the times it purports to depict. Thus, its portrait of prophecy and prophets from the 8th to the 6th century simply represents what redactors that were active centuries later thought of such phenomena; see Carroll, "Whose Prophet?", 37. On the contrary,

represents an exclusively literary phenomenon, which is completely disconnected from the social reality of prophecy in the ancient Near East.⁶⁶ Barstad acknowledges that the depiction that the Bible gives of prophecy and divination matches the corpus of ancient Near Eastern prophecy (e.g. the Mari archives; the Lachish Ostraca), and he concludes that representation of prophecy in the Bible is “historically” correct.⁶⁷ For Barstad, the figures that the tradition considers “prophets” (as in, the “writing” prophets) may not have been prophets at all, and may not have even existed, because there is no doubt that their books are the product of massive, later redaction and expansion. Nonetheless, this does not mean that we cannot know anything about ancient Israelite prophecy and prophets from the Hebrew Bible, because the biblical prophetic texts more than likely incorporated original prophetic sayings.⁶⁸

The long debate which started with Auld’s “Prophets Through the Looking Glass” has been considered highly significant by Philip R. Davies, who decided to include it (both the first *tranche* from the ‘80s and the second one from the ‘90s) in his anthology, *The Prophets* (1996).⁶⁹ In his introduction, Davies highlights the importance of this debate, and asks whether biblical prophecy should be considered a social phenomenon, a literary one, or both.⁷⁰ In a fairly recent article, Martti Nissinen reprises this question, as he believes it to be still “valid and engaging” for the future of prophetic studies.⁷¹ Nissinen reformulates the terms of the dichotomy as “ancient Hebrew prophecy” as opposed to “biblical prophecy”, the former being part of a cross-cultural, near-eastern phenomenon and the latter a literary one.⁷² He acknowledges the fact that the prophetic corpus of the Hebrew Bible is *sui generis* in the ancient Near East, and represents a literary genre that collects the prophetic tradition that the Second Temple communities elaborated over the centuries.⁷³ Nonetheless, contrary to views such as Carroll’s and akin to Barstad’s, Nissinen subscribes to the existence of a historical relationship between the biblical texts and prophecy as a socio-religious phenomenon which was part of the

Auld has no doubt that a “Jeremiah” behind the original nucleus of his book did exist, although he tends to think of this figure as a poet and not a prophet; see Auld, “Words of God and Words of Men”, 240.

⁶⁶ See Barstad, “No Prophets?”, 53.

⁶⁷ See Barstad, “No Prophets?”, 60.

⁶⁸ For Barstad, traces of such original prophetic sayings can be seen especially in the oracles relating to holy war and the so-called “oracles against the nations”; see Barstad, “No prophets?”, 54-55.

⁶⁹ See Philip R. Davies (ed.), *The Prophets* (BS 42; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). The title given to the section including the articles of Auld, Carroll, Williamson, Overholt and Barstad appears under the emblematic title, “What Are Prophets?” (in *The Prophets*, 22-126).

⁷⁰ See Davies, *The Prophets*, 14.

⁷¹ See Nissinen, “The Historical Dilemma of Biblical Prophetic Studies”, in Barstad & Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, 103-20.

⁷² See Nissinen, “The Historical Dilemma”, 108.

⁷³ See Nissinen, “The Historical Dilemma”, 114-15.

ancient Near Eastern culture.⁷⁴ On the one hand, there is formal and linguistic evidence that the authors and redactors who composed the prophetic texts in the Bible were quite familiar with the social and historical reality of prophecy in the Levant. On the other hand, biblical prophecy, although based on such historical phenomenon, should be considered as a literary invention of the Second Temple period.⁷⁵

As we can see, such considerations as to the nature of biblical prophecy clearly affect any reflections on the nature and existence of prophetic conflicts in the Hebrew Bible. If the “writing” prophets were not prophets at all, what can we make of their opponents, the so-called “false” prophets? Furthermore, to what extent can the prophetic conflicts between Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah and other prophets be considered part of the historical development of the religion of ancient Israel? Is there any historical detail that can help us to reconstruct the framework in which their promises of peace may have been uttered?

These are the questions that the present study aims to answer, following on from the studies of Carroll and Garbini, who have pioneered the analysis of prophetic conflicts as an expression of ideology. This analysis will show that the accusations of having promised a false peace developed as an explanation for the fall of Jerusalem, and, in a later period, contributed to the literary creation of prophetic conflicts.⁷⁶ Moreover, the origins and the literary growth of this theme will be reconstructed in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. At the same time, Barstad’s and Nissinen’s position cannot be overlooked, because even though prophetic conflicts are literary creations and expressions of the ideology of the redactors, this ideology and these redactors belonged to a specific cultural and historical context in the tradition of ancient Israel which may be recovered from the texts. This study acknowledges that the biblical texts, although they do not provide any reliable historical reconstruction (because the redactors

⁷⁴ See Nissinen, “The Historical Dilemma”, 116.

⁷⁵ See Nissinen, “The Historical Dilemma”, 118. As regards the fictitious nature of biblical prophecy, consider Barstad’s quote (cited by Nissinen), “A fictitious story is a historically untrue story that could have happened, but did not happen”, in Barstad, “What Prophets Do: Reflections on Past Reality in the Book of Jeremiah”, in Barstad & Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, 28.

⁷⁶ In this introduction, and in the following analysis, the term “ideology” is widely employed, and some clarification is needed. The term “ideology” is considered to have a negative connotation, and when it comes to the Hebrew Bible, the term “theology” is often preferred. Nonetheless, as Davies notes, also “theology” is inappropriate in the context of biblical prophecy, as the redactors of the Hebrew Bible were not “theologians” and their work does not resemble a “theology” in the modern sense; see Davies, *The Prophets*, 16. “Ideology” is here used to express (in a neutral sense) the political, social, intellectual and religious perspective of the redactors, and in such terms, their “theology” is part of their religious ideology. Similar considerations have been expressed also by Garbini, *History and Ideology*, x-xi.

were not historians by any means),⁷⁷ still allows the biblical scholar to attempt to recreate the historical moment that may have given birth to the ideology of the prophetic conflict, and to trace its historical and literary development across the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah.

4. Methodology of Investigation

Over the last 30 years, the quest for the “historical” prophets or the reconstruction of their *ipsissima verba* has stopped to represent a priority for many, as biblical scholars have developed new approaches to investigate the prophetic tradition.⁷⁸ Along with historical-critical studies, also gender focused, post-colonial, literary-rhetorical and socio-anthropological readings of the prophetic books have been undertaken to investigate the many ways in which prophetic books communicate their manifold messages. Consequently, there are potentially many ways to study the *motif* of the false promises of peace from different angles, each one of which has its own peculiarities and special contributions to make. Since this work aims to reconstruct the ideology of the redactors of some passages in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah, redaction criticism will take pride of place.

It should be remembered that the Hebrew Bible as a collection of books is the product of editing that lasted several centuries;⁷⁹ furthermore, the work of the editors was not, as some

⁷⁷ Besides Garbini's study, a short introduction to the problems of biblical narratives as historical records, and of the conception of historiography as ideology within the Hebrew Bible is found in Yaira Amit, *History and Ideology: An Introduction to the Historiography in the Hebrew Bible* (trans. by Yael Lotan; BS 60; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁷⁸ Since the late '80s, prophetic studies are indeed experiencing a paradigm shift; see Ferdinand E. Deist, “The Prophets: Are We Heading for a Paradigm Switch?”, in Volkmar Fritz *et alii* (eds.), *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag* (BZAW 185; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 1-18.

⁷⁹ There is a lasting belief that the Masoretic text, preserved in a medieval manuscript (the *Leningrad Codex*, dated by its colophon to 1008 or 1009 CE), is regarded as more authoritative, and thus more reliable, than other more ancient biblical sources, such as the Greek version or the Qumran scrolls, dating from the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE; see Bruno Chiesa, *Filologia storica della Bibbia ebraica I: da Origene al Medioevo* (Brescia: Paideia, 2000), 3. However, comparison of the different versions provides evidence that almost all the texts in the Hebrew Bible have been edited, expanded and sometimes even shortened. A detailed study as to the work of the editors is found in Reinhard Müller *et alii*, *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Text in the Hebrew Bible* (SBL 75; Atlanta: SBL, 2014). For a study that focuses on the omissions practised by the editors, see Juha Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible* (FRLANT 251; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013).

have speculated, a marginal, even negligible, phenomenon,⁸⁰ but on the contrary was of substantial importance in producing the given form of the biblical text. Any historical or biographical approaches to the prophets and their books are, in this context, affected by some prejudicial assumptions. Firstly, the prophetic books are not “biographies” by any modern standard; they are collections of oracles, of which only a few were once delivered orally before being written down; in any case, these collections were then reworked and reinterpreted for centuries.⁸¹ Secondly, even if we were able to reconstruct from these texts some of the words that the “historical” prophets had uttered in their lifetime (a problem that is considered insurmountable),⁸² it would not diminish the importance of the secondary materials found in them.⁸³ Later insertions cannot be discarded as “less worthy” or “insignificant”, because the fact that they are now part of these books clearly accounts for their value in the eyes of the redactors who transmitted the tradition.⁸⁴

Given that, redaction criticism is an indispensable tool insofar it allows us to trace the literary stages of the development of a text, dealing with primary and secondary elements, but at the same time refraining from expressing any uncritical judgment as to the inherent value of its components. The object of redaction criticism is to inquire into how a given text was arranged, reworked, transformed and finally shaped into its current form.⁸⁵ The goal is to explain to what purpose the secondary elements have been added to an original nucleus (the “core oracle”), and how their presence modifies its content.⁸⁶ It should be considered that the

⁸⁰ This is the position expressed by John Van Seters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the “Editor” in Biblical Criticism* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006); see also, from the same author, “Editing the Bible: The Romantic Myths about Authors and Editors”, *HeBAI* 3 (2014), 343-54. A less radical critique as to the possibility of identifying different editorial layers in biblical texts, which focuses on the limits of this method of enquiry, can be found in Raymond F. Person & Robert Rezetko (eds.), *Empirical Models Challenging Biblical Criticism* (AIL 25; Atlanta: SBL, 2016).

⁸¹ See Nissinen, “How Prophecy Became Literature”, *SJOT* 19 (2005), 153-72; Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 27.

⁸² See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 8-11; Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 33-34.

⁸³ An approach that divides the content of prophetic books into *ipsissima verba* and secondary materials always considers any addition as some sort of “unwanted material” that precludes any investigation into the real prophet, as rightly stated by Terence Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redactional Criticism of the Prophetic Books* (BS 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 14-15.

⁸⁴ This evaluation of the role of the redactors is crucial, in redaction criticism. Redactional analyses aim at finding out who were the redactors, how they approached existing texts and why they edited them. Related to this, Collins writes that, “[w]e may not succeed in answering the question “who?” very satisfactorily, except in general terms, but the questions “how?” and “why?” are in fact more important and we may hope to make some progress in that direction by analysing what they [the redactors] actually did”, in Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 15-16.

⁸⁵ This is the definition of redaction criticism given by Collins, which seems comprehensive and to the point; see Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 15. A similar stance is taken also in Müller *et alii*, *Evidence of Editing*, 15.

⁸⁶ As regards prophetic books, it should be noted that if we limit our readings to their settings (such as the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, for Jeremiah, Jer 1:2), we would not be able to account for the many elements of the books that clearly point to later historical periods. Parts of these texts originally may hark back

Masoretic text is neither the only textual tradition available to the biblical scholar, nor does it represent a “superior” one by any means. In fact, the comparison with other textual traditions has often proved a challenge to the Masoretic version.⁸⁷ Hence, the Masoretic text cannot be taken as the only source for the investigation of the false promise of peace in the Bible, but must be considered against the other ancient sources at disposal, to access and establish the diachronic stages of its development, in order to isolate what is original and to evaluate the secondary additions. The comparison between the Masoretic text of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah and the Greek versions of these books is therefore essential in this study, as the case of Jeremiah will show.

As regards this, there are some differences between the Hebrew and the Greek text of the book of Jeremiah. The Masoretic text of Jeremiah is longer than the Greek one (around one seventh longer) and presents a different arrangement of the materials. The brevity of the Greek text of Jeremiah cannot be taken as evidence of a voluntary abridgement of its Hebrew *Vorlage* on the behalf of its translators, but points to the fact that the Greek version is based on a shorter Hebrew text than the Masoretic one. This understanding is confirmed by some fragments from Qumran (4QJer^{b,d}), which contain parts of Jer 9–10, 43 and 50 and generally agree with the Greek version against the Masoretic text. However, it must also be considered that the *Vorlage* of the Greek text did not correspond to 4QJer^{b,d}, because these fragments correspond to the Masoretic text against the Greek one in five places, and they also contain some readings that are not found in either the Greek or the Masoretic text. A first conclusion is therefore that the Greek text of Jeremiah is based on a short Hebrew *Vorlage*, which was similar but not identical to 4QJer^{b,d}.⁸⁸

to the monarchic period, but the secondary additions have reworked and reinterpreted them for a new context; see Müller *et alii*, *Evidence of Editing*, 13-14.

⁸⁷ See Müller *et alii*, *Evidence of Editing*, 4-5. As regards the accordance between the Septuagint and the Qumran scrolls against the readings proposed by the Masoretic Text, Martone has produced a collection of all the evidence, currently in three parts (Pentateuch, Joshua–Judges and Samuel), which aims to cover in the future the entire Bible. See Corrado Martone, “Qumran Readings in Agreement with the Septuagint against the Masoretic Text. Part One: The Pentateuch,” in Hen 27 (2005), 53-113; “Qumran Readings in Agreement with the Septuagint against the Masoretic Text. Part Two: Joshua–Judges,” in Hilhorst, Puech, and Tigchelaar (eds.), *Flores Florentino: Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish Studies in Honour of Florentino García Martínez* (SJSup 122; Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008), 141-45; and, “Qumran Readings in Agreement with the Septuagint against the Masoretic Text. Part three: Samuel,” in RdQ 25 (2012), 557-73.

⁸⁸ See Emmanuel Tov, “The Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Its Textual History”, in Jeffrey H. Tigay (ed.), *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 1985) 211-237. This essay was later republished as ch. 24 of the collection Tov, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected essays on the Septuagint* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 1999), 363-85.

Moreover, the Greek text is earlier than the Masoretic text,⁸⁹ and, in order to understand the textual relation between these two versions, we should think of them as representations of two different editions of the book of Jeremiah. The first edition is represented by the short Hebrew book of Jeremiah which contained the common text shared by the *Vorlage* of the Greek version and 4QJer^{b,d}, and was written long before a Greek translation was conceived.⁹⁰ The second edition, on the other hand, is represented by a longer book of Jeremiah, which is preserved in the Masoretic text and was based on the first, shorter edition.⁹¹ The second edition contains many additions when compared to the first one (not only words and phrases, but entire sections!), and a comparison between the Masoretic text and the *Septuagint* can help us to reconstruct the hypothetical “original text” (*Urtext*) of Jeremiah, namely its first Hebrew edition. By comparing the different versions of Jeremiah (and of Ezekiel and Micah), it is possible to highlight the work of the later editors of these books and to open a window onto their ideological views.

Besides, since we are dealing with a certain motif (the false promises of peace) that appears in similar form and vocabulary in three separate prophetic books, the redactional analysis enlarges the literary aspects of the investigation. We have a topic (the dishonest nature of the prophets’ promises of peace) that has been addressed, with similar terminology, in three prophetic books. Such similarities and familiarity led scholars to assume some sort of literary dependency. Often, this possibility has been considered to be the result of the personal acquaintance of the “historical” prophets.⁹² More critical stances as regards this relationship

⁸⁹ See Tov, “Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah”, 213. Similarly, see Gerald J. Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* (HSM 6; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 127; Carroll, *The Book of Jeremiah: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 55; William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah I-XXV: Vol I* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), xvi; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2. A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26-52* (Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 3.

⁹⁰ See Tov, “Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah”, 214.

⁹¹ See Tov, “Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah”, 214.

⁹² Since Jeremiah began his prophetic career before Ezekiel, the similarities in their books were explained based on a direct contact between the two; Ezekiel would have heard Jeremiah preaching in Jerusalem before being deported in 597 BCE. Although with different nuances, this viewpoint can be observed in Rudolph Smend, *Der Prophet Ezechiel* (Leipzig: Hirzel, ²1880); Georg Fohrer, *Die Hauptprobleme des Buches Ezechiel* (BZAW 72; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1952); John W. Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels Sprachlich und Theologisch Untersucht, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Prosareden Jeremias* (Van Gorcum's Theologische Bibliothek 28; Assen: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins Neukirchen Kreis Moers, 1955); Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*. Likewise, the similarities between Micah and Jeremiah are explained as a product of the acquaintance of the “historical” Jeremiah with the book of the prophet Micah; see Hee Cha, *Micha und Jeremia* (BBB 107; Wehnam: Beltz Athenäum, 1996).

however have emerged and have moved the focus from the historical prophets to the role of the redactors, who inserted materials from one book into the others.⁹³

A redactional analysis of all the passages that in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah convey the blaming of the prophetic class in the form of utterances of false promises of peace has not yet been undertaken. Such an analysis will benefit two different areas of interest. On the one hand, it will provide new insights as to the prophetic conflicts as a literary phenomenon and as an expression of the anti-prophetic ideology of the redactors who have introduced this element in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. On the other hand, it will deal with the textual relations that connect these three books, to point out in which book this motif is original and how it was inserted in the others. In relation to this, there are currently three terms prominently employed in Biblical Studies to address literary relations that may exist between texts, namely “intertextuality”, “inner-biblical exegesis” and “inner-biblical allusion”.⁹⁴ Although they have been used somewhat interchangeably to refer to the study of textual relations in the Bible, each of these terms presupposes methodological differences of investigation, so that the use of a certain term implies the use of the corresponding methodology.⁹⁵ In order to clarify what kind of analysis will be undertaken in this research, it is of use to explain in more detail the methodological implications of intertextuality, inner-biblical exegesis and inner-biblical allusion.

⁹³ This is the explanation of the supposed Deuteronomistic redaction of the book of Jeremiah found in Thiel’s analysis, in which he ascribes the similarities between Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the work of common Deuteronomistic redactors; see Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973). Similar conclusions can be seen in Zimmerli’s commentary on the book of Ezekiel, which although not questioning the existence of the “historical” prophets behind the books, lessens the need for a personal contact between Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Zimmerli considers that Ezekiel might have had copies of Jeremiah’s sermons in the form they existed before 597 BCE, and, like Thiel, transfers the relationship from the sphere of the oral tradition to that of the written mediation; see Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1-24* (trans. by Ronald E. Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 45-47. Vieweger, on the other hand, considers the relationship between Jeremiah and Ezekiel to exist solely as a result of the work of the scribal circles who edited the books and who were responsible for the insertion of elements from Jeremiah in Ezekiel and *vice versa*; see Dietrich Vieweger, *Die literarischen Beziehungen zwischen den Büchern Jeremia und Ezechiel* (BATAJ 26; Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993).

⁹⁴ Other terms can be added to the list, although generally the three above are always considered. In his work, Petersen adds a fourth, “tradition”; see Petersen, “Zechariah 9–14: Methodological Reflections”, in Mark J. Boda & Michael H. Floyd (eds.), *Bringing out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9-14* (JSOTSup 370; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 210-24. Similarly, Gibson considers a fifth, as “inner-biblical interpretation”; see Johnathan Gibson, *Covenant, Continuity and Fidelity: A Study of Inner-Biblical Allusion and Exegesis in Malachi* (OTS 625; London: T&T Clark, 2016).

⁹⁵ In a recent article, Meek has analysed the terminology with which biblical scholars refer to the connections between texts and called for an “ethical” use of these labels; see Russell L. Meek, “Intertextuality, Inner-Biblical Exegesis, and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Ethics of a Methodology”, *Biblica* 95 (2014), 280-91.

4.1 Defining Relations between Texts

The first item on the list, intertextuality, is certainly the one that requires most caution, especially regarding its use within Biblical Studies.⁹⁶ The term intertextuality was coined by post-structuralist semiotician Julia Kristeva, although in developing such a notion she was largely influenced by the theory of dialogism proposed by literary critic Mikhail M. Bakhtin. Hence, it seems necessary also to consider Bakhtin's own contribution. Although today Bakhtin's work is extremely influential in literary criticism, linguistics, philosophy and social and political sciences, it came to be known in the West only through Kristeva's early work in the late 1960s.⁹⁷ Bakhtin's theory of dialogism emerged as an alternative to the Saussurean theory of language. While de Saussure understood language to be an abstract, synchronic system,⁹⁸ Bakhtin attributes to language a practical specificity, because, he argues, language exists only as part of social situations, and hence is part of an incessant becoming (as opposed to a stable system).⁹⁹ A cornerstone of Bakhtin's theory is that language cannot be separated from the "here and now", as it is bonded to the conditions of a given social situation.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, from Bakhtin's perspective, language cannot be separated from previous utterances and pre-existent patterns of meaning; an utterance exists only and always in relation to the history of previous discourses and enters into a chain of discourses which will be advanced and

⁹⁶ The term intertextuality has become popular in Biblical Studies to address textual relations on different levels, but it must be observed that almost every scholar in the field seems to understand it somewhat differently. This opinion has been voiced by many; Patricia K. Tull, "Intertextuality and the Hebrew Scriptures", *CurBS* 8 (2000), 59-90; Geoffrey D. Miller, "Intertextuality in Old Testament Research", in *Currents in Biblical Research* 9(2011), 283-309; Alan Kam-Yau Chan, *Melchizedek Passages in the Bible: A Case Study for Inner-Biblical and Inter-Biblical Interpretation* (Warsaw, Berlin: de Gruyter Open, 2016), 212. It has even been suggested that the term "intertextuality" may have been abused by biblical scholars to make their work more appealing; see Ellen van Wolde, "Trendy Intertextuality?", in Sipke Draisma (ed.), *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1989), 43-49. However, even in Semiotics, the concept of "intertextuality" appears to elude any specific definitions, as considered by Allen, "each theorist comes to intertextuality hoping it will provide an informing tool or model for interpretation, but each theorist soon realizes that, as a concept, intertextuality plunges one into a series of oppositions and questions [...] and requires one to engage with them rather than forcing one to produce definite answers", in Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (NCI; New York: Routledge, 2000), 59-60.

⁹⁷ As regards this, see especially Kristeva's "The Bounded Text" and "Word, Dialogue, Novel". These two essays are comprised in the collection edited by Leon S. Roudiez & Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez; New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36-63 and 64-91 respectively.

⁹⁸ De Saussure's discourse on linguistics and linguistic signs was published in the collection of his essays from 1915, *Cours de linguistique générale*. For an English edition, see Ferdinand de Saussure *et alii*, *Course in General Linguistics* (trans. by Wade Baskin; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

⁹⁹ See Mikhail M. Bakhtin & Valentin N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (trans. by L. Matejka & I. R. Titunik; SLS; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 86.

¹⁰⁰ See Bakhtin & Pavel N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* (trans. by Albert J. Wehrle; GCS; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 120.

continued by those yet to come.¹⁰¹ Therefore, language is not an abstract system, but a concrete system, in which the words of one speaker are always in relations with those of other speakers.¹⁰²

While Bakhtin's idea focused on language as part of human interactions in social situations, Kristeva's concept of intertextuality transposes dialogic language to texts. For Kristeva, authors do not create their texts from their original minds but compile them from pre-existing texts.¹⁰³ So, she conceives every text to be a mosaic of quotations and a transformation of other texts;¹⁰⁴ no text exists as an autonomous entity and has a meaning that is unique to itself, but it always relates to other texts in a constant "intertextual" dialogue.¹⁰⁵ Post-structuralist approaches, such as Kristeva's, are clearly reader-centered and highlight a synchronic dimension while considering the relations between a great number of texts. According to Kristeva and other post-structural theorists, such as Roland Barthes, the reader is the active player in the production of meaning from a text, and not the author.¹⁰⁶ This means that intertextuality focuses on the connections between several texts made by the reader, and ignores limits of time and space.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, in the realm of Semiotics, a "text" is not limited to the written word but represents a network of different kinds of signs (not only words, but images, sounds, gestures) which refer to other signs.¹⁰⁸ Finally, "intertextuality" does not develop criteria for establishing

¹⁰¹ See Bakhtin & Voloshinov, *Philosophy of Language*, 72.

¹⁰² See Bakhtin & Voloshinov, *Philosophy of Language*, 95.

¹⁰³ See Kristeva & Toril Moi, *The Kristeva Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 86.

¹⁰⁴ "[...] tout text se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre text", in Kristeva, *Séméiotiké: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Collection Tel Quel; Paris: Seuil, 1966), 146. For a concise introduction to Kristeva's theory with reference to Biblical Studies, see Timothy K. Beal, "Ideology and Intertextuality: Surplus of Meaning and Controlling the Means of Production", in Danna N. Fewell (ed.), *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1992), 27-39.

¹⁰⁵ See Kristeva, *Séméiotiké*, 143-46.

¹⁰⁶ As regards this, Barthes styles the author as a modern and capitalist notion, which endorses dominant social structures which were unknown to the past when paternity or authorship over texts were not considered important. The concept that each text has a unity and a meaning that stem directly from the mind of its creator is, for Barthes, an illusion. For Barthes, authors are compilers of what is and what has always been written and always spoken, their texts are just quotations that belong to countless centres of culture; see Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *Image, Music, Text: Essays Selected and Translated by Stephen Heath* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-48.

¹⁰⁷ In Kristeva's use of intertextuality, a diachronic perspective and concepts such as influence and sources are ignored; elements such as text and context may somehow be reciprocal, but are irremediably divided; see Allen, *Intertextuality*, 69. As regards intertextuality presenting mostly a synchronic approach in Biblical Studies, see Michael H. Floyd, "Deutero-Zechariah and Types of intertextuality", in Boda & Floyd (eds.), *Bringing out the Treasure*, 226; Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 19; G. Miller, "Intertextuality", 294; Meek, "Ethics of Methodology", 283.

¹⁰⁸ See Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *Image, Music, Text*, 156-60; Jacques Derrida, "Living on Border Lines", in Harold Bloom *et alii* (eds.), *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 84. Further considerations with an eye to Biblical Studies can be found in Cynthia Edenburg, "Intertextuality, Literary Competence and the Question of Readership: Some Preliminary Observations", *JSOT* 35 (2010), 131-48.

intertextual relationships, because it departs from the *a priori* observation that all texts are inter-connected.¹⁰⁹

The above represents intertextuality as is conceived and employed by post-structuralist theorists (in line with Kristeva, Barthes, Derrida), and aims at opposing systematized notions such as the uniqueness of a text and its individual meaning and interpretation. Starting from the 1970s, theorists have also proposed structuralist approaches to intertextuality, by presenting the intertext as a set of signs that constitute a coherent system that can be investigated.¹¹⁰ Among these critics, the role of Gérard Genette has been fundamental. Not dissimilarly from Kristeva and Barthes, Genette refutes the objective value of individual texts as bearers of a unique meaning; nonetheless, he considers that all texts relate to a structured system that can be evaluated by literary critics. Genette considers the literary critic to be a *bricoleur*, who rearranges elements which have already been arranged and creates a structure from elements of previous structures.¹¹¹ While writing their texts, authors simply assemble elements from a system (themes, motifs, key-words, metaphors, quotations) into their work, and the duty of the literary critic is to return these elements to the system out of which the work was constructed and to make every relation clear. Instead of calling this semiotic process “intertextuality”, Genette rather talks of “transtextuality”, which he defines as “all that sets the text in relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts”.¹¹² Genette’s structuralist approach is more pragmatic and inclusive than the one proposed by Kristeva and Barthes. In fact, he considers intertextuality to be a sub-category of transtextuality, which relates to the presence of one text into another; in Genette’s terms, intertextuality is reduced to quotation, plagiarism and allusion that can be understood in their signifying relations to a structured system.¹¹³ In any case, intertextuality (whether part of a post-structuralist or structuralist approach)¹¹⁴ is always concerned with finished texts in relation to other finished texts, because all texts are reactions to other texts. If we go back to Biblical Studies, it appears that the concept

¹⁰⁹ See G. Miller, “Intertextuality”, 285; Meek, “Ethics of Methodology”, 284.

¹¹⁰ See Allen, *Intertextuality*, 95-132.

¹¹¹ See Gérard Genette, *Figures of Literary Discourse* (trans. by Alan Sheridan; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 5.

¹¹² See Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction* (trans. by Jane E. Lewin; Berkely: University of California Press, 1992), 83-4.

¹¹³ See Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1-2.

¹¹⁴ More detailed discussions as regards the differences between these two approaches and their theorists can be found in Allen, *Intertextuality*, 95-7; and Thaïs Morgan, “Is There an Intertext in This Text? Literary and Interdisciplinary Approaches to Intertextuality”, in *AJS* 3 (1985), 1–40.

of “intertextuality” has been applied very broadly in the field compared to Semiotics, and usually refers to any relationships that may exist between texts.¹¹⁵

As regards the second item, the most influential method used to study inner-biblical exegesis, intended as the analysis of the relationship between earlier biblical texts and their reuse in subsequent texts, has been outlined by Michael Fishbane in his *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (1985).¹¹⁶ Fishbane posits that the transmission of the biblical *corpus* stimulated and produced reinterpretations for new times and circumstances of an authoritative, received text (*traditum*) which was transformed into a receptor text (*traditio*).¹¹⁷ Overall, Fishbane argues that the activity of scribes was an interpretative and *de facto* transformative activity, which was willing and capable of creating textual connections among texts, while structuring a uniform tradition under the authority of the Scriptures.¹¹⁸ Fishbane has considered four types of inner-biblical exegesis: scribal comments and corrections; legal exegesis; haggadic exegesis and mantological exegesis.

The first category is represented by comments or corrections to enable later readers to understand unfamiliar terms or phrases.¹¹⁹ The remaining three types of exegesis all modify the *traditum* more significantly. Legal exegesis aims to resolve ambiguities and problems of formulation by reinterpreting existing legal texts.¹²⁰ Haggadic exegesis also makes use of pre-existing legal materials but ranges over every theme, idea or genre in the literature of ancient Israel. Whereas legal exegesis tries to fill a gap in legislation, haggadic exegesis departs from a *traditum* but explores and proposes new configurations of meaning, thus transcending its original focus.¹²¹ Finally, mantological exegesis refers to oracular materials, and comprises the prophets’ reinterpretation of authoritative texts from the tradition in order to actualize, explain

¹¹⁵ As noted by Paul R. Noble, “Esau, Tamar, and Joseph: Criteria for Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions”, in VT 52 (2002), 219; Michael R. Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8* (OTS 506; London: T&T Clark, 2009), 17; G. Miller, “Intertextuality”, 285.

¹¹⁶ Fishbane dedicated most of his career to the study and methodological development of inner-biblical exegesis, as most of his studies point out; see Fishbane, “Revelation and Tradition: Aspects of Inner-Biblical Exegesis”, JBL 99 (1980), 343-61; *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*; “Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Types and Strategies of Interpretation in Ancient Israel”, in Geoffrey H. Hartman & Sanford Budick (eds.), *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 19-37; “The Hebrew Bible and Exegetical Tradition”, in Johannes C. de Moor (ed.), *Intertextuality in Ugarit and Israel* (OTS 40; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 15-30; “Types of Biblical Intertextuality”, in André Lemaire & Magne Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998* (VTS 80; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 39-44.

¹¹⁷ See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 6-8.

¹¹⁸ See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 521, 525-44.

¹¹⁹ See Fishbane, “Inner-Biblical Exegesis: Types and Strategies”, 21-22.

¹²⁰ See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 282.

¹²¹ See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 282-83.

or expand them.¹²² Fishbane is very clear in explaining that, contrary to tradition-history, which pertains to the domain of oral traditions that at some point reach authoritative status, inner-biblical exegesis reformulates (or innovates, or adapts, or simply changes) previous, already authoritative teachings or tradition that are vital for the religious-cultural tradition.¹²³

Although there are different types of inner-biblical exegesis, the relationships between texts are always determined by the same principles. Firstly, unlike intertextuality, inner-biblical exegesis highlights a diachronic perspective; the basic assumption being that for an author to re-elaborate a text, this text must have existed previously.¹²⁴ Secondly, the focus is not so much on the reader but on the author, as inner-biblical exegesis tries to determine whether the relation between texts is the result of an intentional borrowing, and if so, to explain why.¹²⁵ Thus, inner-biblical exegesis investigates whether and how biblical authors have referred to previous texts, by either expanding or commenting on their content. It is fundamental that the relation between *traditum* and *tradition* responds to the editors' concerns of conserving, rendering contemporary, or reinterpreting authoritative teachings and traditions for new circumstances;¹²⁶ only when the modification of a previous text in a later one and its purpose are evident, can we properly assess the presence of inner-biblical exegesis.¹²⁷

There are in fact cases in which an editor is making a simple allusion to remind the reader of a previous text. In this case, the term "inner-biblical allusion" is more appropriate. Inner-biblical allusion can be considered methodologically akin to inner-biblical exegesis, although it presents its own dynamics.¹²⁸ The main difference is found in the context in which it should be implied. Whereas inner-biblical exegesis investigates the development of a source text in a new composition, with inner-biblical allusion the aim is to establish that a later text alludes to

¹²² See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 443-44.

¹²³ See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 8.

¹²⁴ See Fishbane, "Revelation and Tradition", 344; *Biblical Interpretation*, 465. On the contrary, Kristeva openly objects to the reduction of "intertextuality" to a search for the historical sources behind written texts; similarly, Barthes states that the intertext is made of anonymous formulae that cannot be located; see Kristeva & Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, 59-60; Barthes, "Theory of the Text", 39. However, Genette considers a particular kind of transtextuality (which he calls "hypertextuality") to connect a later text B (the hypertext) to an earlier text A (the hypotext), which represents its major source of signification; see Genette, *Palimpsests*, 5.

¹²⁵ Authorial intentions are considered fundamental traits of inner-biblical exegesis; see Floyd, "Deutero-Zechariah", 226; G. Miller, "Intertextuality", 288, 305; Meek, "Ethics of Methodology", 289; Gibson, *Covenant*, 31-32.

¹²⁶ See Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 8.

¹²⁷ As rightly considered by Meek, "Ethics of Methodology", 282.

¹²⁸ Meek observes that often the two terms are erroneously used in place of one another in scholarship; see Meek, "Ethics of Methodology", 289.

a previous one, and not to establish if and how it modifies it.¹²⁹ Thus, both inner-biblical exegesis and allusion focus on the authorial intentions in connecting two texts and present the same methodological approach. However, inner-biblical exegesis should refer to cases in which the receptor text (*traditio*) has modified the source text (*traditum*), while inner-biblical allusion should be used when the receptor does not present intentions of reinterpreting the source materials, although it evidently borrows from it, and creates a connection for the reader.¹³⁰

Although theoretically it would be possible to consider the textual relations between the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah as regards the prophets' promises of peace under one of the labels provided by the above terminology, it seems safer to avoid such a procedure in this study. In fact, inner-biblical exegesis takes into consideration authoritative texts (especially legal texts) that are actualized or reinterpreted, but this does not seem the case here. Similarly, inner-biblical allusion focuses mostly on textual relations that trigger the recollection of a previous text in the reader, an aspect that however should be assumed in most textual relations. Although not endorsing an explicit reader-centered perspective, it must be said that if a reader does not manage to notice the relations between one text and the other (even when expressly made by the author), such a connection does not exist. Finally, the term intertextuality has been used with more liberty by biblical scholars, but this should invite some caution. Nothing in this analysis in fact will resemble the concept of intertextuality as presented by Kristeva, Barthes and Genette, so, strictly speaking, it seems misused in this context. At its core, this project is a redactional critical analysis that focuses on the role of some later redactors of the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah who have developed and shaped a certain motif ("promising peace") to support their ideological agenda. The following analysis will demonstrate that the motif of "promising peace" originally belonged to one book and was later adapted and inserted elsewhere. Moreover, the authors responsible for these insertions were aware of reusing a traditional motif and hence the correspondences between these books were produced intentionally.

¹²⁹ Among those who have theorized the method of inner-biblical allusion, Nurmela departs from the consideration that evidence of intentional allusion of one text to another can be found exclusively in verbal repetitions. Nurmela has been sceptical of "thematic allusions", which he deems too vague, and rather works only with parallel "expressions" (with this term, Nurmela considers words and phrases); see Risto Nurmela, *Prophets in Dialogue: Inner-Biblical Allusions in Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1996), 27. Similarly, Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotations: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets* (JSOTSup 180; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 222-38.

¹³⁰ As considered by Petersen, "Zecharia 9-14", 212; Meek, "Ethics of Methodology", 289.

4.2 Establishing Relations between Texts

In biblical literature, textual relations between texts are seldom made obvious or explicit by the authors, and scholars have developed some methodological tools to help establish them. Shared vocabulary is of utmost importance to establish textual relations and direct literary dependency between texts.¹³¹ Likewise, also the context in which shared vocabulary recurs must be addressed to evaluate the probability of an intentional correspondence and to exclude whether the parallels are due to other reasons. As regards this, it must be considered that textual relations exist under several degrees of specificity. It is self-evident that two texts that share identical sentences are connected to a different degree than texts that have only few words in common. A link exists in both cases but is obviously of a different kind. Numerous classifications and different terms have been employed in scholarship to account for these degrees of correspondence, and agreement is not found as to a unique terminology. It appears that the correspondences between texts that scholars consider are mostly similar, but they are referred to with different terms.¹³² However, every system of classification works under the general assumption that a text, or parts of it, can be copied *verbatim* into another, or that it can be partially inserted (just a few clauses or words) into another one. In this study, the correspondences between the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah as regard to the promises of peace can be described as *quotations*, *allusions*, or *echoes*, which identify different degrees

¹³¹ As considered by Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 8; Jeffrey M. Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions: Psalm 78 as a Test Case", *JBL* 127 (2008), 241-65; Meek, "Ethics of Methodology", 289; Gibson, *Covenant*, 33-34.

¹³² Categorizing correspondences between texts has produced quite a chaotic scenario. For some recent examples, Nurmela speaks of "exclusive verbal similarities", "synonymic verbal similarities" and "thematic similarities"; see Nurmela, *Prophets in Dialogue*, 28. Sommer considers a neat differentiation between "allusion" to be used only in diachronic analyses, and "influence" for a synchronic investigation. For Sommer, a text may allude to another in three ways: "explicit citation", "implicit citation", and "inclusion"; see Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scriptures: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (JD 13; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6, 21-22. Floyd identifies textual similarities and correspondences as "quotations", "allusions" and "echoes"; see Floyd, "Deutero-Zechariah", 226-27. In Stead's study on Zechariah 1-8, textual relations are explained in terms of "citations", "quotations", "allusions", "echoes" and "traces". Stead's methodology explicitly refers the studies in Semiotics of Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida, and this is reflected in parts of the terms he chooses (especially *trace*); see Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 21-22. Nogalski's analysis of "intertextuality" in the Twelve uses "quotations", "allusions", "catchwords", "themes" and "framing devices", although similarities with Floyd's and Stead's classifications are found; see James D. Nogalski, "Intertextuality and the Twelve", in John D. W. Watts & Paul R. House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* (JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 105. Gibson divides formal correspondences in "citations", "quotations", "allusions" and "traces"; see Gibson, *Covenant*, 41-43.

of connection.¹³³ As an important premise, all these terms are here intended to be author-centered, pointing at an intentional borrowing of the author from one text to the other.

As regards the definitions of the terms, “quotation” refers to a word-for-word repetition, implying that an author has taken a sentence, a phrase or a paragraph from one text and inserted it into another one (e.g. Jer 6:14 and Ezek 13:10).¹³⁴ An “allusion” identifies a partial re-use of words or ideas, implying that an author has chosen to re-use some words or a motif to stimulate the reader’s recollection of another text (e.g. Jer 14:13–16 and Ezek 13:1–11).¹³⁵ Finally, the term “echo” identifies a re-use of a motif, with very few identifiable elements from the source material, although the connection can still be established (e.g. Jer 23:9–32 and Mic 3:5–8).¹³⁶ It is important to remember that this terminology does not identify fixed categories or watertight compartments; fluidity from quotations through allusions and on to echoes must be assumed. In addition, also the use of “catchwords” must be mentioned. A catchword is a significant word in a text that is (re-)used in another text to refer to a specific feature of the previous one. Since catchwords are meant to trigger the recollection of a text (or a motif) in the reader, this label can be applied only to significant words in significant contexts, and work as devices that trigger allusions.¹³⁷ In the current study, the catchwords “peace” and “falsehood”

¹³³ This solution is influenced by Gibson’s methodological consideration in his study on Malachi. Gibson (in turn influenced by R. B. Hayes) rightly considers that although scholars have used different terminology, to facilitate clarity, a continuum should be imagined from the highest degree of correspondence, namely a direct citation, to the lowest, as in a correspondence which leaves no traces at all. That given, the categories of quotation, allusion and echo fall in between these poles; see Richard B. Hayes, *Echoes of Scriptures in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 23; Gibson, *Covenant*, 39–40. Similar considerations (namely that these categories are part of a spectrum and some overlapping should be assumed) are found also in Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 22; Nogalski, “Intertextuality”, 105–8.

¹³⁴ This definition is based on the considerations of Floyd, Stead, Gibson and Nogalski, who all consider, with minor nuances (Stead and Gibson separate “citations” and “quotations”), the direct borrowing of words, phrases or paragraphs as part of a “quotation”; see Floyd, “Deutero-Zechariah”, 226; Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 22; Gibson, *Covenant*, 39; Nogalski, “Intertextuality”, 103–4.

¹³⁵ “Allusion” has proven to be a difficult term to use, mostly because any implicit or explicit references to another text that are not direct quotations constitute some sort of allusion. Hence, “allusion” is often used as a general term for several techniques of referring to another text; see Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 22; Nogalski, “Intertextuality”, 109–11. There are of course more technical definitions of “allusion” (see Petersen, “Zechariah 9–14”, 212; Floyd, “Deutero-Zechariah”, 227), but, for the goal of this study, it seems superfluous to point out too many distinctions or sub-categories.

¹³⁶ This is the definition of echo seen in Stead (following Hays). However, Stead includes also a quantitative approach in dealing with shared vocabulary. He considers that allusions may have two or three words in common with their source, and echoes only one or two; see Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 22. As Gibson notes, there is a problem with the quantitative approach, namely that specific syntactical constructions may require the same word pattern. If the quantitative approach is considered, even passages that are unrelated but use the same syntax could be erroneously taken to be allusions of one another; see Gibson, *Covenant*, 40. Hence, “quantity” alone, when considering shared vocabulary, should not be considered a sign of an explicit textual relation.

¹³⁷ In his study, Nogalski works with “catchwords” as a particular degree of textual relations, although he admits that they also represent a specific allusion; see Nogalski, “Intertextuality”, 112–16. The concept of “catchword” is extremely valuable in establishing and defining relations between texts, and cannot be overlooked, although

in relation to the faults of the prophets link together all the passages selected from Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah.

However, resemblance between texts cannot always be explained as one author re-using another, and textual connections may not be deliberate.¹³⁸ There are some criteria to establish if a text is deliberately referring to a literary tradition.¹³⁹ Firstly, when two texts share vocabulary that is commonplace in the Hebrew Bible, this parallel is more than likely accidental.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, if two texts are using vocabulary (or a motif) that is well attested in biblical or ancient Near Eastern literature, there is a strong possibility that these texts are independently drawing from the same traditional material and are not alluding to one another. Conversely, if the shared vocabulary is neither common nor appears as part of a conventional motif, the possibility of an intentional borrowing is likely.¹⁴¹ Lastly, if a text presents the tendency to alter the wording or ideas of an earlier text or displays a preference for a specific text, then the shared items that display those tendencies are likely to be a case of deliberate borrowing.¹⁴² All these elements will be considered when dealing with the redaction history of

it seems safe to take it as a device that triggers allusion, rather than one kind of it. For the importance of words/roots as linking devices between texts, see Stead, *Zechariah 1-8*, 36-37; Gibson, *Covenant*, 34. Stead considers also cognate terms or synonyms as possible signs of textual connections, whereas Gibson accepts only identical roots (but not necessarily identical grammatical forms). Gibson's solution seems more reliable, as it appears that the use of the exact same word/root is essential to trigger the reader's recollection of the source on behalf of the writer.

¹³⁸ As Floyd notes, when an expression or a theme become part of the common cultural domain, writers may refer to it without being aware of making a direct connection to the source that generated it; see Floyd, "Deutero-Zechariah", 226.

¹³⁹ The criteria here considered are influenced by Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation*, in which he presented useful tools to establish inner-biblical exegesis (references below). Important considerations, which developed from Fishbane's work, are found in Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger", VT 46 (1996), 479-89; Gibson, *Covenant*, 34ff.

¹⁴⁰ Fishbane talks of "multiple and sustained linkages between texts", and he considers it as a plausible place for textual connections, although the context needs to be evaluated to exclude a coincidental relation; see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 285. As to this, Gibson rightly notes that the presence of common words or phrases used evenly but in different contexts is likely coincidental; see Gibson, *Covenant*, 34.

¹⁴¹ Contextual and thematic analogies, supported by shared lexemes, are essential to establish a conscious borrowing, as stated by Leonard, "Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions", 255; Gibson, *Covenant*, 37. Fishbane considers the importance of context especially in relation to the reinterpretation of prophetic oracles; see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 509-11. A good example of what may be called a "false positive" is given by Sommer, who presents two texts about sacrifice from the book of Isaiah, namely Isa 1:10-18 and 43:22-26. These texts show an impressive deal of common terminology, but provide weak evidence of textual relations, as the similarities consist of expected vocabulary in texts dealing with sacrifices (such as, sacrifice, burnt offerings, fat). Hence, such a parallel should be treated as a coincidence; see Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality", 484.

¹⁴² This is an element considered in Sommer, "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality", 484-85, based on what Fishbane defines as "textual transformations, reapplications and reinterpretations" of one text into another. Fishbane considers that in the absence of objective evidence, sustained lexical parallels between texts, in which one often re-thematized the other, can be taken as evidence of inner-biblical exegesis; see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 282-85.

the motif of “promising false peace” and its transmission in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah.

There are, of course, limits to the outcomes that can be achieved through this methodology. Although the texts may give some clue to the scholar to identify redactional activity within their composition, scholarly consensus has not been reached as to any criteria to separate original and secondary materials in one text, or to establish beyond doubt connections between two texts. Moreover, a text may have been edited without leaving any traces, and it should also be considered that “editing” is not limited to adding materials, but may include omitting, relocating and rewriting.¹⁴³ The results of this redactional-critical analysis are conjectural and should be taken as reasonable hypotheses as to the literary growth of a text and its relationship with other texts. Nevertheless, although the results of redaction criticism can be debated, the importance of the work of the redactors in shaping the Hebrew Bible can neither be dismissed nor overlooked; indeed, when it is carefully addressed, it can improve our understanding of the historical and social environment in which the culture that produced the Hebrew Bible was developed.

5. Outline of Investigation

To reconstruct the redactional history of a peculiar literary strand and answer some of the problems in the current scholarly interpretation of “false” prophecy and prophetic conflicts, all the excerpts that deal with the motif of “promising a false (שקר) peace (שלום)” in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah will be isolated. All these passages, which present similar vocabulary employed in similar contexts, constitute the field for the investigation of the textual relations among these three prophetic books. To justify the order in which the books will be addressed (Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah), there are two reasons that need to be considered. Firstly, the book of Jeremiah contains more passages that can be ascribed to the literary motif of “promising peace” (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12; 14:13–16; 20:1–6; 23:9–22; 27–29; 37:19), while the books of Ezekiel and Micah only have one text respectively (Ezek 13:1–16; Mic 3:5–8). Moreover, it appears that the book of Jeremiah shows distinct redactional stages

¹⁴³ Müller *et alii*, *Evidence of Editing*, 15.

as regards this peculiar motif (from the simplest occurrences to the most detailed ones), whereas no internal development can be isolated in Ezekiel and Micah, for obvious reasons. Nonetheless (and this is the second reason), the passages in Ezekiel and Micah present textual and thematic characteristics that match only some of the passages found in Jeremiah – generally, the most detailed. Hence, it appears that the motif of promising peace in Ezekiel and Micah is dependent on Jeremiah's later stages of development of the same literary strand. Hypothetically, Jeremiah presents the oldest mention of blaming the prophets for promising peace. As regards the relations between Ezekiel and Micah, priority will be given to Ezekiel because of the presence of an identical sentence in Jer 6:14 and Ezek 13:10, לאמר שלום ואין שלום, “they say peace, but there is no peace”, which represents the closest kind of textual relationship, namely the presence of part of one text into another. On the other hand, no direct quotations (either from Jeremiah or Ezekiel) are found in Micah, but a different degree of textual connections is to be found.

As regards the outline of the research, the relations between the passages from Jeremiah will be scrutinized, showing that they all present analogous features and are evidently part of the same literary strand, whose development can be traced throughout the book (Chapter 2). Then, Ezek 13:1–16 will be considered, highlighting its connections to the promises of peace found in Jeremiah, but also stressing its peculiarities (Chapter 3). Similarly, the same procedure will be followed for the last passage, Mic 3:5–8, which presents correspondences with and differences from Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Chapter 4). Throughout the analysis, it will be shown how the motif of promising peace has been developed (and to what purpose) in Jeremiah, and why and how later redactors have reprised it in Ezekiel and Micah. For each text, a translation will be provided, along with a reconstruction of the history of its redaction and an analysis of the motif as it appears in the context. The comparative analysis will work in a diachronic perspective, to present the development and literary transmission of the motif, from its very first appearance to its later exegetical reinterpretations. Finally, results from all the previous chapters will be evaluated, focusing on what can be said of “false” prophets and prophetic conflicts considering the redactional analyses of these passages, the literary growth of the motif and the ideological stances of the redactors (Chapter 5).

Though being primarily a literary analysis, this study shall not ignore the historical aspects *behind* the texts. Texts, as expressions of human thought, do not exist in a vacuum but are a product of history, and although there are no prophetic *personae* to reconstruct as “authors” of the prophetic books, the ideas and concepts (the ideology) that the redactors have expressed

under the *auctoritas* of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah had their own place in the history of Israel and in the development of the Hebrew Bible. The redactors chose to use authoritative voices of the past to convey reflections on their present, and although it is mostly precluded to us, we may still be able to reconstruct, even if only fragmentarily, their historical and intellectual milieu.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ The idea is that although prophetic books have been shown to be of little or no use in reconstructing the life and time of the prophets they are ascribed to, their content may still grant scholars some access to the world of those who produced and edited such books; see Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah*, 16; Müller *et alii*, *Evidence of Editing*, 14.

Chapter 2

Promises of Peace in the Book of Jeremiah

1. Introduction and Outline

This chapter looks at the charges of having promised peace and prophesied falsehood that the book of Jeremiah directs at the religious class of Jerusalem, most noticeably, at the prophets. Such accusations are to be found in different sections of the book as well as in peculiar literary contexts. To facilitate the analysis, these texts will be divided into four different groups based on their characteristics.

The first group comprises Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12 and 14:13–16. All these passages revolve around a famous motif in the book of Jeremiah, namely the coming of an invading army that will strike from the North. In this context, the priests and the prophets are accused of having misled the people – they promised peace, but their words were revealed to be vain and false. The second group includes only Jer 23:13–32. Overall, Jer 23 is a well-known *locus* for the conflict between Jeremiah and other prophets, who spread falsehood in the nation. Jer 23:13–32 points to the indictment of the prophets within the social sphere in the form of promises of peace and falsehood, but do not present any elements of warfare, so they deserve to be considered on their own. The third group, however, focuses on the charges against the prophets in relation to the Babylonian invasion, in Jer 27–29 and the short excerpt 37:17–21. Although resembling the first group, which deals with the enemy from the North, these passages have their own distinctiveness, as they describe detailed settings, vivid characters and even a peculiar depiction of Jeremiah. Finally, one last passage will be considered, namely Jer 19:14–20:6, in which the priest Pashhur confronts Jeremiah. This last episode will serve as a final example of the development and literary growth of the motif of promising peace in the

book of Jeremiah, along with its role in prophetic conflicts and in the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets.

2. The Religious Class and the Foe from the North

The first occurrences of the promises of peace and the falsehood attributed to the religious class of Jerusalem appear in a collection of early oracles generally labelled as “the foe from the North” cycle (Jer 4:5–6:30).¹ The oracles here gathered all reference an unnamed enemy that will strike from the North, and although they possess heterogeneous elements,² these texts revolve around YHWH’s imminent destruction of Judah to punish its sins, which have become unbearable. To do so, the deity will send out a foreign army to bring destruction and desolation (this element recurs *passim* in the first chapters of the book; e.g. Jer 1:13–16; 4:5–8, 13–22, 27–31; 5:15–17; 6:1–8, 22–26; 8:14–17).

None of the oracles in this section can be dated with precision, as the reference to an anonymous enemy that will come from the North reads cryptic. As a result, scholars have generally considered a significant temporal length to constitute a suitable background to the reading of at least part of the materials in Jer 4:5–6:30, ranging from the reign of Josiah to that

¹ The existence of the thematic section Jer 4:5–6:30 is accepted by John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation and Notes* (AB 21. New York: Doubleday, 1965), 63; Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 1-25* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 50; John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 86, 218; Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, to Tear Down: A Commentary on Jeremiah 1-25* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 53; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25* (WBC 26; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 71; Douglas R. Jones, *Jeremiah: Based on the Revised Standard Version* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 30; Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah* (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 63. Few commentators have proposed a longer unit (namely, Jer 4:5–10:25), as sporadic references to a northern enemy are found beyond Jer 6:30; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah. Chapters 1-25* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 133; and Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (AB 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 333, whose work replaces John Bright’s Anchor Bible commentary on Jeremiah.

² The composite nature of Jer 4–6, which presents short oracles revolving around the same *leitmotif*, has been widely recognized; see Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 81; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 160; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, lxxxiv; Mark E. Biddle, *Redaction History of Jeremiah 2:1-4:2* (ATANT 77; Zürich: TVZ, 1990), 29, 81; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 70; Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century BCE* (SBL 3; trans. by D. Green; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 314; and Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 84. Among other scholars who dissent as to this and attribute the entire book to the “historical” Jeremiah, Jones holds a peculiar position. He does not question the editorial work that shaped the book of Jeremiah in its final form but considers Jer 1–6 to represent Baruch’s scroll (Jer 36). In his understanding, Jeremiah’s secretary assembled in chs. 1–6 the earliest preaching of the prophet, with almost no glosses and only marginal expansion; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 29–30.

of his successor Jehoiakim, and even on to the fall of Jerusalem.³ Similarly, the identity of the enemy from the North is ambiguous. Older scholars, who read this section against the backdrop of the early years of King Josiah, have considered the “foe from the North” to refer to the Scythians, a nomadic people who inhabited large areas in the central Eurasian steppes, and who may have threatened Judah around 627 BCE.⁴ Those who instead claim that the setting ranges from 605 to 587, all understand the “foe” to be referring to the Babylonian empire.⁵

It should be noted that within Jer 4:5–6:30 no explicit reference to Babylon appears, although this is certainly the interpretation given by later passages of the book (e.g. Jer 25:9 and 46:24). The book of Jeremiah purports to present the words of a prophet of the sixth century, Jeremiah ben Hilkiyah (Jer 1:1–3), who was mostly active during the years of the Babylonian invasions, so this identification of the invader with Babylon cannot be questioned. Nevertheless, given that the book of Jeremiah is mainly the result of the efforts of redactors who were active much later than its supposed temporal settings, what originally stood behind the label רעה מצפון, “evil from the north” (Jer 4:6; 6:1), and its author are precluded to us.⁶

Within this chapter, which investigates the connection between the promises of peace and the military invasion, the first excerpts addressed will be Jer 6:13–15 and 8:10b–12, which read almost identically. It will be shown that Jer 6:13–15 represents the earliest mention of the motif in the book of Jeremiah and has served as model for the insertion of the later 8:10b–12. Then, Jer 5:30–31 will be considered, as these verses evidently reprise the charges of falsehood

³ Bright (followed by J. Thompson) argues that part of the materials was composed during the last years of Josiah (around 605); however, he also states that some of the poems are “so graphic” that may have been composed while the invasion was in progress; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 34 and J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 218. Overholt considers it more likely that the core oracle was spoken prior to the Babylonian attack in 597; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 29. Similarly, Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 340. Nicholson instead assumes the first siege of Jerusalem in 597 to be the *terminus post quem* for the redaction of large part of the section; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 5. Conversely, McKane is more sceptical and considers the dating of these passages pure guesswork; however, he accepts the invasion of 587 to constitute the background for part of the section; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 140, 147. Holladay assumes that the battle of Carchemish (605) stimulated the materials for the “foe from the North” cycle, and considers the years between 605 and 601, with the rising of the Babylonian empire, to constitute its settings; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 135. Similarly, also Craigie dismisses the possibilities of a late dating (thus, between 597 and 587) and argues that the core of the section belongs to the last years of Josiah; see Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 72.

⁴ See Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KHC 11; Tübingen: Mohr, 1901), 48; John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cunningham Lectures; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 39. J. Thompson rightly objects that this identification relies solely on the information that Herodotus gives of this Eurasian people (*Hist.*, i.102-6), ignoring the fact that the Greek historian never connects the Scythians to Judah or to Palestine in general; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 86.

⁵ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 34; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 72; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 87; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 135; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 72; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 340.

⁶ For the difficulties of reconstructing the figure of Jeremiah based on reliable historical data, see Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 8-11.

against the priests and prophets seen in Jer 6:13–15; 8:10b–12. Finally, although it is not part of the literary cycle about the “foe from the North” cycle, Jer 14:13–16 will be examined, as it presents the motif of promising peace in the context of the coming of an enemy army (Jer 14:11–18). To contextualize the redactional analysis and the importance of the framework of the “foe from the North” cycle within this investigation, first it is necessary to address some of the theories of composition and redaction that scholars have proposed as regards the formation of the book of Jeremiah.

2.1 The Composition of the Book of Jeremiah

To the eyes of the modern reader, the book of Jeremiah hardly resembles a “book” in the contemporary sense of this term, as it lacks the coherence and structure that characterize modern literature. In fact, the reader will find a constant alternation of poetry and prose therein, often interspersed, with little or no introduction to the episodes it narrates. Moreover, double accounts of the same events are also frequent, which questions the idea of a single hand behind its composition. The origin of such a peculiar collection of writings (including prophetic oracles, poetic laments and prose narratives, such as biographical and historical accounts) is at the center of a long debate in scholarship.

The first historical-critical enquiry which addresses the composition of Jeremiah is represented by Bernhard Duhm’s commentary *Das Buch Jeremia* (1901). In Duhm’s hypothesis, the poetry and the prose materials in the book are not the product of the same writer, allegedly the prophet Jeremiah. In fact, only the poetic oracles comprised in the first half of the book (chs. 1–25) should be taken as the *ipsissima verba* of the “historical” prophet later collected by his scribal circle.⁷ Following this original nucleus, a biography of Jeremiah written by his personal secretary, Baruch, and other prose supplements added by later redactors have coalesced to its final form.⁸

Not too dissimilarly from Duhm’s, another hypothesis involving source criticism is represented by Sigmund Mowinckel’s *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (1914).⁹ Mowinckel identifies four different sources,¹⁰ each one with its own redactor. First, Mowinckel

⁷ See Duhm, *Jeremia*, xi–xx.

⁸ See Duhm, *Jeremia*, xvi.

⁹ See Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1914).

¹⁰ However, in his following work, focusing on biblical prophecy rather than solely on the book of Jeremiah, Mowinckel avoids references to “sources”, but rather considers different traditions that contributed to the final form of Jeremiah’s book; see Mowinckel, *Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in the Light of the Study*

considers the poetic oracles in Jer 1–25 (source A) as essentially the words of the “historical” prophet.¹¹ Secondly, he isolates the historical narratives of the life of Jeremiah (source B).¹² Thirdly, Mowinckel presents the speeches of the prophet that do not belong to the previous sources and that show stylistic similarities to the so-called Deuteronomistic History¹³ (source C).¹⁴ Finally, the last source is represented by the salvation oracles in Jer 31–32 (source D).¹⁵

The theories of Duhm and Mowinckel have been the most influential in the debate as to the origins of the book of Jeremiah and revolve mostly around ascribing authorship to poetry and prose respectively. Especially Mowinckel’s source C attracted comments and the possibility of a Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah greatly influenced the debate regarding its literary growth. Exegetes in fact noticed the presence of Jeremianic texts that strongly resembled the themes and style of Deuteronomy and other Deuteronomistic texts. James Philip Hyatt was the first to delve more deeply into a Deuteronomistic edition of the sayings of Jeremiah, concluding that such a redaction was indeed produced and intended to emphasize the role of Jeremiah as a supporter of King Josiah’s reform.¹⁶ Hyatt’s suggestion was later developed by Siegfried Hermann’s *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im Alten Testament* (1965),¹⁷ and Ernest W.

of the Growth and History of the Tradition (Avhandlingar utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Hist.-filos. klasse, 3; Oslo: Jacob Dwybad, 1946), 48-51, 62-67.

¹¹ See Mowinckel, *Komposition*, 21.

¹² See Mowinckel, *Komposition*, 24-25.

¹³ The concept of Deuteronomistic History was first employed by Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, first published in Germany in 1943; for the first English edition, see Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981). In this prominent work, Noth takes the books from Joshua to 2 Kings as a uniform editorial section, which has been shaped in its current form by a single redactor. The aim of this redaction, for Noth, is to present the fall of Jerusalem and the exile as consequences of the broken covenant with YHWH brought about by the people’s sins. Noth’s hypothesis has been incredibly influential throughout the years, and generated a vibrant discussion, although a clear definition of Deuteronomistic History is far from settled. Nevertheless, scholars widely accept the presence of a Deuteronomistic Historiography in the Bible, although often working with different interpretations as regards its characteristics and boundaries. For example, some would argue that traces of Deuteronomistic Historiography are found also in Genesis–Numbers; see Konrad Schmid, “Deuteronomy within the ‘Deuteronomistic Histories’ in Genesis–2 Kings”, in Schmid & Raymond F. Person Jr. (eds.), *Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch, Hexateuch, and the Deuteronomistic History* (FAT II 56; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 8-30. For an exhaustive assessment of the research into Deuteronomistic History, see Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History* (London: T & T Clark, 2007); Römer & Albert de Pury, “Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debate Issues”, in Albert de Pury *et alii* (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOTSup 306; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24-141.

¹⁴ According to Mowinckel, examples of such materials are seen in Jer 7:1–8:3; 11:1–5, 9–14; 18:1–12; 21:1–10; 25:1–11a; 32:1–2, 6–16, 24–44; 34:1–7, 8–22; 35:1–19; 44:1–14; see Mowinckel, *Komposition*, 31.

¹⁵ See Mowinckel, *Komposition*, 45-48.

¹⁶ See J. Hyatt’s article from 1951 (“The Deuteronomic Edition of Jeremiah”), reprinted and included in Leo G. Perdue & Brian W. Kovacs (eds.), *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 247-67.

¹⁷ See Siegfried Hermann, *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im Alten Testament: Ursprung und Gestaltwandel* (BWANT 85; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965).

Nicholson's *Preaching to the Exiles* (1970),¹⁸ although the most influential analysis of the role of the Deuteronomists in shaping the book of Jeremiah is found in Winfried Thiel's two-volume examination, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia* (1973; 1981).¹⁹ Thiel considers that chapters Jer 1–45 present an impressive number of linguistic features and ideas which are already found in the Deuteronomistic theology.²⁰ He therefore considers that an extensive and systematic Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah took place in Judah after the fall of Jerusalem. The Deuteronomistic redactors were responsible for most of the prose materials found in the book, which represents in its final form a product of the Deuteronomistic theology.

However, not all scholars have accepted the idea that others apart from Jeremiah may have contributed to the final form of his book. In contrast with Thiel's reconstruction, based on a stylistic and linguistic analysis, Helga Weippert has defended the role of the "historical" Jeremiah as author of most of the prose materials and has ascribed very few portions of the final product to other hands, in her *Die Prosareden Jeremiabuches* (1973).²¹ Similarly, Holladay has explained the similarities with Deuteronomy as part of the standard rhetorical style of the time, and concluded that, as part of Josiah's reform, the book of Deuteronomy was read in public and thus known to the "historical" Jeremiah, who adapted his personal writing style from it.²² In both cases, these scholars are convinced that, within the Jeremianic corpus, the authentic words of Jeremiah can be recovered.²³

A substantial critique of this assumption and of the hypothesis of a systematic redaction of Jeremiah (whether Deuteronomistic or not) was later proposed by Robert P. Carroll's commentary on Jeremiah and especially by William McKane's two-volume *A Critical and*

¹⁸ See Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles. A Study of the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970). Nicholson ascribes the Deuteronomistic materials to a scribal circle active in Babylon during the exile; see Nicholson, *Preaching*, 122-23, 131-33.

¹⁹ For Thiel's second volume, see Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981).

²⁰ Thiel identifies the central ideas of the Deuteronomistic theology in Jeremiah as the centrality of the temple of Jerusalem, the role of the prophets as preachers of the Law, the exile in Babylon as a punishment for the sins of the nation and the return to the land as part of a new covenant with the deity; see Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 301-2 and *Redaktion 26-45*, 107-12.

²¹ See Helga Weippert, *Die Prosareden Jeremiabuches* (BZAW 132; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1973).

²² See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 53-63.

²³ Carroll defines the scholarly postulation that the prophet Jeremiah can be reconstructed from his book as the "Skinnerian approach", based on Skinner's studies on Jeremiah (see note 4 above). Carroll considers that this approach often results neither uncritical nor too conservative, but departs from the assumption that the inner thoughts, if not directly the words of the man Jeremiah are accessible to the scholar, who must navigate through the additions of the redactors to recover them; see Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 6.

Exegetical Commentary of Jeremiah (1986, 1996).²⁴ Carroll undertakes a “sceptic reading”²⁵ of the book of Jeremiah that involves abandoning the search for the contribution of the “historical” Jeremiah to the book, and that investigates the redactional activity that contributed to the creation of the literary depiction of the prophet Jeremiah. He argues that several scribal groups, with their own religious and political agenda, contributed to the final form, much later than the purported settings of the book.²⁶ Unlike Carroll, McKane is more trusting of the settings of the book, which he considers mostly a product of the sixth century. Nonetheless, like Carroll, he disagrees with those scholars who see a coherent redactional plan within the book of Jeremiah.²⁷ The book of Jeremiah, McKane argues, is too obscure and inconsistent to represent any form of systematic redaction. He rather sees the formation of the book as a *rolling corpus*, in which one passage is inserted on top of another in a continuous expansion with circumscribed contextual limits.²⁸

Before proceeding, a closing note as to the possibility of a Deuteronomistic redaction in the book of Jeremiah seems necessary. This analysis often references the work of exegetes that had no doubt when ascribing a major role into the production of the book of Jeremiah to Deuteronomistic scribes who were connected to those responsible for the Deuteronomistic History in Joshua–2 Kings. In fact, Hyatt, Nicholson and Thiel all presented the Deuteronomists’ work in Jeremiah as a quite cohesive and uniform editorial activity, dated to the sixth century BCE. However, this analysis also references studies that are openly sceptical of such a view. McKane’s understanding of the book is evidently in contrast with the above reconstruction, while Carroll’s, albeit being critical of the concept of a uniform redaction in Jeremiah, accepts that some Deuteronomistic scribal circles had an important role in the final form of Jeremiah, but also envisages the work of post-Deuteronomistic circles and other political groups, whose activity ranges from the fall of Jerusalem to the Graeco-roman period.²⁹

It should also be added that the evidence of a Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah relies exclusively on recurring terminology and turns of phrase between texts from the so-called

²⁴ For McKane’s second volume, see McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah XXVI–LII*, Vol II (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996). McKane already argued against the effectiveness and objectivity of Weippert’s approach in McKane, “Relations Between Poetry and Prose in the Book of Jeremiah with Special Reference to Jeremiah III 6–11 and XII 14–17”, in John A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Vienna 1980* (VTS 32; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 220–37.

²⁵ In Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 48.

²⁶ See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 57–8, 70.

²⁷ See McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, lii–lxii.

²⁸ See McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, li, lxii–lxxxiii.

²⁹ See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 78 and 107.

Deuteronomistic History and Jeremiah, thus it is eminently an argument from style.³⁰ In fact, Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann has rightly observed that what critics call “Deuteronomistic style” is easy to imitate,³¹ to the point that is impossible to circumscribe it to just one individual period of the history of Israel.³² Besides, Thomas Römer considers that not all the passages that present Deuteronomistic terminology appear in the Greek version of Jeremiah, meaning that the Deuteronomistic redaction cannot have happened at once.³³ Scholars tend to date such Deuteronomistic plusses in the Masoretic text of Jeremiah later than the Babylonian period (in the Persian period,³⁴ the Hellenistic period,³⁵ and even in the Hasmonean period).³⁶ Hence, even if we accept that a Deuteronomistic redaction in Jeremiah did take place, any connections to the editors responsible for the Deuteronomistic History is based solely on style.

As far as the possibility of a Deuteronomistic redaction in Jeremiah goes, this study does not negate, nor wishes to ignore that the prose and themes of Deuteronomy and of Deuteronomistic texts turn up in several passages in the book. However, there is not enough evidence to consider a coherent redactional plan behind the final structure of the book of Jeremiah, whether we call it Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic. Moreover, some scholars have even considered evident theological differences between the book of Jeremiah overall and the

³⁰ This is a remark by Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, which is on point; see Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT 118; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 16-18.

³¹ See Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch*, 16. It appears that a Deuteronomistic style was still fashionable in the Graeco-roman period; see Römer & Jean Daniel Macchi, “Luke, Disciple of the Deuteronomistic School”, in Christopher M. Tuckett (ed.), *Luke's Literary Achievement* (JSNTSup, 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 178-87.

³² As regards this, Pohlmann denies a Deuteronomistic redaction in Jer 24, 37–44, although these chapters present many stylistic features of the Deuteronomistic style (as argued by Thiel, *Redaktion 26-45*, 50). For Pohlmann, the Golah-oriented perspectives in Jer 24, 37–44 are irreconcilable with the Deuteronomistic ethos (which is generally more prone towards the restoration of the Davidic dynasty), and he dates them not earlier than 400 BCE; see Pohlmann, *Die Ferne Gottes: Studien zum Jeremiabuch. Beiträge zu den "Konfessionen" im Jeremiabuch und ein Versuch zur Frage nach den Anfängen der Jeremiatradition* (BZAW 179; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989).

³³ See Römer, “Is There a Deuteronomistic Redaction in Jeremiah?”, in Albert de Pury et alii (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History*, 403-4. It should be said that Römer welcomes the possibility of not just one Deuteronomistic redaction in Jeremiah, but of two, which belonged to two different periods (“Is There a Deuteronomistic Redaction in Jeremiah?”, 421).

³⁴ See Yohanan Goldman, *Prophétie et royauté au retour de l'exil: Les origines littéraires de la forme massorétique du livre de Jérémie*, (OBO, 118; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1992).

³⁵ See Herman Josef Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches: Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte* (OBO, 136; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 142-43.

³⁶ See Adrian Schenker, “La rédaction longue du livre de Jérémie: doit-elle être datée au temps des premiers Hasmonéens?”, ETL 70 (1994), 281-93.

ideology of the Deuteronomists.³⁷ Given such uncertainty surrounding the notion of a Deuteronomistic redaction in Jeremiah, this study shall focus exclusively on redactional interventions *per se*. In fact, commentators may agree that a given passage in the book of Jeremiah reads as it is secondary, but not all of them would consider it Deuteronomistic, or would connect it to the activity of one circle of editors whose work can be identified clearly throughout the outline of the book. Establishing the alleged Deuteronomistic nature of many additions in the final form of Jeremiah is not essential to this research;³⁸ what is crucial is rather to establish that we are in the presence of interconnected redactional interventions that respond to specific ideological goals.

Finally, given the impossibility of reconstructing the “historical” prophet and the undeniable importance that the work of the redactors had in shaping the book in its current form, the unfruitful quest for its author can no longer be pursued. Currently, redactional analyses found some agreement in considering that the book developed from a small core of laments within the “foe from the North” cycle (Jer 4:7, 11, 13, 19–21; 6:1, 22).³⁹ These passages are anonymous and emphasize the coming of an unnamed invader from the North; in a secondary development, the redactors have connected these oracles to the fall of Jerusalem and incorporated, as a theological explanation, that YHWH instigated the military invasion as a way to punish the unfaithful nation (Jer 4:5–6; 6:2).⁴⁰ The literary growth of the book of Jeremiah began from this core, and proceeded to its current form thanks to the work of different redactors who were active for centuries. Having contextualized these notions, we can now turn to the first textual analysis of this study.

³⁷ See Pohlmann’s *Die Ferne Gottes*. Similarly, Stipp has inquired why the editors of Joshua–2 Kings never mentioned Jeremiah (who instead appears in 2 Chr), given they were very much close to the Deuteronomistic redactors of Jeremiah; see Stipp, “Probleme des redaktionsgeschichtlichen Modells der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches”, in Walter Gross (ed.), *Jeremia und die “deuteronomistische Bewegung”* (BBB 98; Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 225–62.

³⁸ It should be considered that there are many definitions of the term “Deuteronomistic” and that they often conflict; see Richard J. Coggins, “What Does ‘Deuteronomistic’ Mean?”, in J. Davies *et alii* (eds.), *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed: Essays in Honour of John F. A. Sawyer* (JSOTSup 195; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 135–48.

³⁹ That the materials found in Jer 4:5–6:30 represent the oldest oracles in the book is considered by Christoph Levin, *Die Verheißung des neuen Bundes: in ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Zusammenhang ausgelegt* (FRLANT 137; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 153–56; Pohlmann, *Die Ferne Gottes*, 129–32; Schmid, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches: Untersuchungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Jer 30–33 im Kontext des Buches* (WMANT 72. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1996), 330–35; Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 57, 128.

⁴⁰ See Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 57. Carroll also states that the *leitmotif* of the “foe from the North” was considered so prominent that later redactors inserted it as the subject of the prophet’s first vision (Jer 1:13–19); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 107.

2.2 They Say “Peace, Peace!”, But There is No Peace (Jer 6:13–15; 8:10b–12)

In a chapter that mostly deals with the invaders coming from the North, Jer 6:13–15 is quite peculiar. In fact, it presents charges of falsehood aimed at the religious class of Jerusalem (priests and prophets) for having promised peace when there was no peace in the future of Judah. The same accusations aimed at priests and prophets turn up again in Jer 8:10b–12, this time in a different chapter, whose context mostly revolves around the sinful behaviour of the people. There are no referents to date these two almost identical passages, and scholars generally place them in the general context of the respective chapters.⁴¹ Nonetheless, as it will be argued below, there are grounds to consider both as secondary additions, most probably inserted at least after the fall of Jerusalem, which serves as *terminus post quem* for their dating.

2.2.1 Jeremiah 6:13–15 and 8:10b–12 as Secondary Additions

Many commentators consider Jer 6:13–15 as being part of the longer literary unit 6:9–15.⁴² Similarly, Jer 8:10b–12 are often taken in the general indictment against the community, the scribes and the wise men, in Jer 8:4–12.⁴³ However, Jer 8:10b–12 are not represented in the Greek version, so the fact that their content appears almost identical elsewhere in the book is widely accepted as proof of their origin as a secondary addition in Jer 8:4–12.⁴⁴ Thus, scholars

⁴¹ As regards Jer 6, the settings are those proposed for the “foe from the North” materials; see note 3 above. As regards Jer 8, Bright situates the apostasy described in Jer 8:4–7 in the years immediately following Josiah’s reform; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 65. J. Thompson opts for the early years of Jehoiakim’s reign, around 605; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 297. Holladay places the composition of the chapter closer to 601; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 277. Craigie dates part of the chapter to the years in between 605 and 597 but admits that some of it belongs to later periods; see Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 129. However, no referents in the text support any of these proposals.

⁴² This is the division offered by Theo Laetsch, *Jeremiah* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1952), 82; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 44; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 67; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 255; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 135; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 69; Craigie *et alii*, 102; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 135 Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 65; and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 86.

⁴³ See Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 106; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 65; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 85; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 296; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 132. Others work with a longer unit, namely Jer 8:4–13; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 274 and Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 98. However, Jer 8:13 is more than likely a fragment and should be considered within another unit, namely Jer 8:13–17; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 271. Only Brueggemann works with Jer 8:4–17; see Brueggemann, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 82. The understanding of all these scholars is that 8:10–12 is secondary in 8:4–12(13).

⁴⁴ For those who agree with this reconstruction, see note 45 below. In contrast with most commentators, Laetsch (accepting Condamin’s argument that an author has the right to repeat himself) takes the repetitions as a sign of Jeremiah’s style, which appears excessively trusting of Jeremiah’s authorship of the book; see Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 106, 109. To explain the omission of MT Jer 8:10b–12 from G, Janzen has argued that the text of Jer 6:13–15 was originally only found in Jer 6 (a tradition which he names Type A and constitutes the *Vorlage* of G), but it dropped out by homoioteleuton (because of the similar formulae נא־מִיָּהוּהוּ in 6:12 and אִמַּר יְהוָה in 6:15). Due to the similarities between Jer 6:12a and 8:10a, the content of 6:13–15 has been wrongly restored after Jer 8:10a, generating another family of manuscripts (Type B). Finally, a conflation of the types A and B has generated

have generally taken Jer 6:13–15 to be original in Jer 6 and consequently understood them to be the model for Jer 8:10b–12.⁴⁵ A general explanation is that Jer 6:13–15 better suits its context, although it should be considered that also Jer 8:10b–12 is a perfect fit in Jer 8, right after the blaming of the scribes and the wise men, so this argument is not adequate and appears arbitrary.⁴⁶ However, the evidence provided by the textual tradition of the Greek version is strong enough to support the conclusion that Jer 8:10b–12 is indeed a later insertion in Jer 8. The case of Jer 6:13–15 is more complicated. It should be noted that Jer 6:12 ends with the formula נאם־יהוה, thus it signals that Jer 6:13 is the beginning of a new unit. The only element that militates against this reconstruction seems to rely on the similarities between Jer 6:12 and 8:10a, to which almost identical passages have been attached (Jer 6:13–15; 8:10b–12), favouring the assumption that Jer 6:12–15=8:10–12.⁴⁷ However, this partition appears as the result of the fallacious equivalence Jer 6:12a=8:10a, which apparently has led scholars to separate Jer 6:12 and 8:10a from their original units (namely, the oracular units Jer 6:10–12 and 8:8–10a). However, Jer 6:12a and 8:10a may not represent variants, despite some literary connections.

The Hebrew of Jer 6:12a reads ונסבו בתיהם לאחרים שדות ונשים יחדו, “their houses shall be turned to others, the fields and the women as well”; while 8:10a goes לכן אתן את־נשיהם לאחרים, “therefore I will give their women to others and their fields to conquerors”. As we can see, the two lists are divergent (houses, fields and women in Jer 6:12a; but 8:10a only presents women and fields), and the items appear in a different order. Secondly, 8:10a clearly interprets the judgement as a punishment issued by YHWH (the verb is in first person sing., אתן), while 6:12a is more generic (in the *niphal*, ונסבו). Finally, while in 6:12a the properties simply go לאחרים, “to others”, 8:10a reads ליורשים, “to conquerors”. More than being variants and parts of the same editorial layer, it seems that Jer 6:12a and 8:10a are independent verses of indictment that refer to the same source material, which is probably found in a Deuteronomic

the tradition preserved in the MT; see Janzen, *Studies*, 95–96. However, it should be noted that the reading of G does not prove that Jer 6:13–15 is original in Jer 6, but simply signals that Jer 8:10b–12 is secondary in Jer 8. Moreover, instead of a conflated text, it seems simpler to assume two different editorial interventions in two separate moments for the final form of Jeremiah MT (the *Vorlage* of G belongs to a textual tradition in which Jer 8:10b–12 had not yet been added).

⁴⁵ This solution is supported by Duhm, *Jeremia*, 90; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 65; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 187; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 274; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 132; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 517 and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 110.

⁴⁶ As noted by Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 88; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 198.

⁴⁷ As considered by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 65; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 85; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 274; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 187; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 274; Craigie, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 134; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 97.

background.⁴⁸ Hence, they should not be considered as part of the units Jer 6:13–15=8:10b–12.

2.2.2 Translation, Critical Notes and Textual Comparison

Jer 6:13-15

¹³ Because from the least to the greatest of them (1), everyone is given to covetousness. And from (2) the prophet to the priest, everyone commits falsehood. ¹⁴ They have treated the destruction of my people (3) lightly, saying “peace, peace” but there is no peace. ¹⁵ They were not ashamed for they committed abomination. They were not ashamed at all, they do not know how to humiliate (4); therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time when I punish them (5) they shall be cast down, says YHWH.

Jer 8:10b-12

^{10b} Because from the least to the greatest (1), everyone is given to covetousness. From (2) the prophet to the priest, everyone commits falsehood. ¹¹ They have treated the destruction of the daughter of my people (3) lightly, saying “peace, peace” but there is no peace. ¹² They were not ashamed for they committed abomination. They were not ashamed at all, they do not know how to be humiliated (4); therefore, they shall fall among those who fall; at the time of their punishment (5) they shall be cast down, says YHWH.

- (1) Jer 6:13 presents third m. pl. suffixes *ועד־גדולם*, “from the least to the greatest of them”, while the suffixes are missing in Jer 8:10b *ועד־גדול*;
- (2) The initial *waw* (וּמַנְבִּיאַ) in Jer 6:13 does not appear in 8:10b;
- (3) The expression *עַמִּי*, “my people”, in 6:14, instead of *בַּת־עַמִּי*, “the daughter of my people” in 8:11;
- (4) Jer 6:15 presents the verb *כָּלַם* in the *hiphil*, meaning “to humiliate”, while the parallel in Jer 8:12, vocalizes the verb as a *niphal*, so “to be humiliated”;

⁴⁸ A close resemblance with Deut 5:21 (and its alternative form recurring in Exod 20:17) is highlighted by Brueggemann and Parke-Taylor. Holladay considers Deut 28:30 as yet another source of inspiration for Jer 6:12, while Lundbom points out similarities in content with both Deut 5:21 and 28:30; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 216; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 68; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 426; Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases* (SBL 5; Atlanta, Georgia: SBL, 2000), 97.

- (5) Jer 6:15 reads בַּעַת־פְּקֻדָּתֵיהֶם, “at the time when I punish them”; Jer 8:12 reads instead, בַּעַת, פְּקֻדָּתָם, “at the time of their punishment”;

All the differences listed above are generally minor (except for point 4) and can easily be explained. As regards (1) the pl. suffixes missing in Jer 8:10b, they represent a textual variation of a stereotypical introduction that is well rooted in the rhetoric of the book of Jeremiah (e.g. Jer 16:6, in pl. masculine without suffixes, and reverse order; 31:34=6:13; 42:1, 8=8:10b; and 44:12=8:10b). A possible explanation for the different reading in Jer 8:10b could be the presence of the pre-existing direct objects in 8:10a (namely, “conquerors”), which could have created ambiguity with the pl. suffixes in Jer 8:10b, which refer to priests and prophets. This was clearly not the case for the editor who inserted Jer 6:13–15 in ch. 6, because 6:12 ended with the oracular formula which closed the previous unit. The missing *waw* (2) in Jer 8:10b does not allow for any conclusions, while (3) the expressions עָמִי (6:14) and בְּתִעְמִי (8:11) are likely to be interchangeable.⁴⁹

On the other hand, the change of form (4) in the verb כָּלַם from the *hiphil* (Jer 6:15) to the *niphal* (Jer 8:12) instead represents a problem. There is little doubt that Jer 6:13–15 served as the model for 8:10b–12; nevertheless, the *hiphil* form in Jer 6:15, “to humiliate”, hardly makes sense and commentators generally emend it according to the *niphal*, “to be humiliated”, of Jer 8:12.⁵⁰ This correction is necessary, since the *niphal* of כָּלַם is the standard parallel with the word בּוֹשׁ, meaning that the *hiphil* stem is not genuine in 6:15. It seems plausible to assume that an error occurred in the transmission of Jer 6:15, while Jer 8:12 preserved the correct form.

Finally, (5) some commentators favour the translation of Jer 8:12 פְּקֻדָּתָם, “their punishment”, even in place of the form פְּקֻדָּתֵיהֶם, “I punish them”, found in Jer 6:15.⁵¹ It must be

⁴⁹ The expression עָמִי is the most common in the book of Jeremiah, while בְּתִעְמִי has fewer occurrences. The latter is simply more emphatic than עָמִי, as considered by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 162 and Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 344. Nonetheless, some emend the reading of Jer 8:11 according to Jer 6:14; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 85; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 274; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 132. This solution does not seem necessary, since the reading of Jer 8:11 might be the result of the influence of the poem in Jer 8:18–9:1, in which the expression בְּתִעְמִי recurs three times; see Janzen, *Studies*, 38. Furthermore, both Syr and V, along with some Hebrew manuscripts, have the equivalent of בְּתִעְמִי in both 6:14 and 8:11, pointing out that a semantic difference between the two expressions is unlikely.

⁵⁰ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 45; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 197; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 144; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 217; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 102; Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, 95; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 83. Lundbom, who defends the *hiphil* form in Jer 6:15, still avoids the causative form in his translation (he opts for “show humiliation” instead of “cause humiliation”), which seems revelatory of how the *hiphil* hardly makes sense in the verse as it is; see Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 431.

⁵¹ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 45; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 256; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 145; and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 102.

said that a change in the text of Jer 6:15 does not appear necessary, because both the expressions פקדתי and פקדתיים work grammatically and are attested in Jeremiah. Moreover, the *Septuagint* and the *Vulgate*, along with some Hebrew manuscripts, present פקדתי in 6:15, so an error of a copyist in the transmission of the Masoretic text in Jer 6:15 seems likely.⁵² As we can see, the discrepancies between the two excerpts are minor and do not justify the overturning of the reconstruction in which Jer 6:13–15 represents the model for 8:10b–12. The shift in form would represent the only element accounting for the priority of Jer 8:10b–12, but the testimony of the Greek text excludes this possibility categorically.

2.2.3 Falsehood, Peace, Shame: The Clergy and the Demise of Jerusalem

The opening of Jer 6:13⁵³ presents YHWH's judgement, which commentators generally understand to be directed towards the totality of the community,⁵⁴ but the expression מקטנם ועד גדולם could simply stand for the entirety of the clergy of Jerusalem. Since commentators generally read 6:13–15 as part of a longer unit, they consider greed and corruption as referring to the entire community in Judah. However, due to the secondary nature of Jer 6:13–15, this solution appears inadequate. Moreover, the first charge in Jer 6:13, כלו בוצע בצע, signals that greed is a pervasive wickedness in Judah.⁵⁵ This may read as a broad accusation against Judean society, but the word בצע hints at bribing and coercion,⁵⁶ which suits perfectly as an exclusive reference to the wealthy class of the religious officials. In fact, practices such as palm-greasing and bribery are appropriate for those in positions of power, like temple personnel, and would hardly apply to the lower strata of the social structure.

The main accusation against the religious leaders of Jerusalem is exemplified with the expression עשה שקר, “to commit falsehood”, which has been understood in different ways. Some scholars consider it to represent a general accusation, so that priests and prophets, in a climate of widespread social injustice, are seen as being guilty of committing fraud.⁵⁷ More

⁵² *Contra* Holladay, who considers the expression פקדתיים in 6:15 as *lectio difficilior*; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 211.

⁵³ Given the priority of Jer 6:13–15 over 8:10b–12, references will be made mostly to this text.

⁵⁴ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 50; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 258; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 198; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 216.

⁵⁵ This is the understanding of Bright, *Jeremiah*, 50; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, p.258; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 198; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.1, 146 Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 216. However, G and Syr agree in understanding the Hebrew בצע as a more general form of misconduct and not plain greediness, so some ambiguity in the text may persist.

⁵⁶ As rightly recognized by Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 216.

⁵⁷ This is the opinion of Bright, Nicholson, Laetsch and J. Thompson, who take the expression עשה שקר as

persuasive is the opinion of those who connect the term שקר directly to what follows (6:14), in such a way that the priests and the prophets are seen as not simply dealing falsely, but are rather uttering one very specific lie: they promise שלום in a context in which peace obviously is not a possible outcome.⁵⁸ The negligence of the clergy is highlighted in Jer 6:14, as they have underestimated the grave condition of the people and have treated their wound superficially.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, it must also be considered that the word שבר, “destruction”,⁶⁰ is a key term in the “foe from the North” cycle, which is generally coupled with the expression רעה מצפון, “evil from the North” (Jer 4:6; 6:1) and identifies the threat of the enemy army sent out by YHWH. The most plausible interpretation is that the שקר of priests and prophets, which resulted in an underestimation of the שבר of the people, refers directly to the *motif* of the invading army from the North.⁶¹

Some scholars, however, understand Jer 6:14 to be a reflection of the complacency of the clergy after the religious reform of King Josiah. The priests and the prophets may have decided to ignore the wrongdoing of the community, led by the delusional thought that YHWH would have rescued his people. Unfortunately, the well-being of the nation was always conditioned on obedience to the word of YHWH; the spiritual leaders felt a false sense of security and neglected their duty; therefore, judgement would come for the whole community.⁶² Such an explanation however seems to overlook the connection between the charges of falsehood and the promises of peace, and the relevance that both these elements acquire within the framework

referring to the frauds and the deceit committed by priests and prophets; see Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 85; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 50; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 69; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 258. Likewise, Holladay, who however considers that the subsequent “peace, peace” (Jer 6:14) should be read as an exclusive claim of the prophets, and not of the priests; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 216.

⁵⁸ As Overholt as pointed out in his study on the word שקר in Jeremiah, the term covers mainly three domains. Firstly, it recurs in order to identify idolatry and foreign cultic practices (Jer 3:23; 7:9). Secondly, it denotes the utterances of Jeremiah’s opponents (Jer 27:12-15; 28:15). Finally, it embodies the false sense of security that the prophets transmitted to the people, which seems to be the case in Jer 6:13 (also in Jer 14:14-15; 23:17); see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 1, 29, 75. The peculiar significance of the term שקר in Jeremiah would be lost if it was taken simply as a synonym of רעה, “evil”. This interpretation is supported by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 198; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 69; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 104; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 430.

⁵⁹ Scholars usually understand the medical imagery in Jer 6:14 to be a metaphor for dishonest reassurance, which is sound; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 75; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 198; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 147; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 217; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 104.

⁶⁰ The medical connotation of the term רפא, “to treat/heal”, justifies the rendition “fracture” for שבר in Jer 6:14, although the term generally points to collapse, destruction and ruin.

⁶¹ Carroll and Pohlmann both point out the connection between the term שבר and the demise of the reign of Judah; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 198; Pohlmann, *Die Ferne Gottes*, 93.

⁶² Such interpretations are found in Bright, *Jeremiah*, 50; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 258; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 213; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 69; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 104.

of the “foe from the North” cycle. This connection along with the themes of war, invasion and destruction is strengthened by the content of Jer 6:15.

The occurrence of “shame” terminology in 6:13–15 (e.g. the term בוש, “shame”, which recurs twice, and once the verb כלם, “to humiliate”) matches with warfare. In the Hebrew Bible, “shame” is not in contrast with the concept of honour, but rather stands in opposition to ruin and deprivation, which are often associated with natural disaster.⁶³ The idea of shame, in biblical context, denotes a physical deterioration caused by calamities. Thus, it does not represent an inner psychological process, but a physical condition that must be treated, generally using gestures and practices that resemble the ritual of mourning.⁶⁴ The priests and the prophets are not lacking a proper sense of shame for their misconduct,⁶⁵ but they rather refuse to expiate their very specific sins through public humiliation.⁶⁶ The peculiarity of these accusations (which are characterized by שקר in 6:13 and שלום in 6:14) along with the undeniable connections with the *motif* of military destruction (which are expressed with the term שבר in 6:14) and general disaster (exemplified by shame terminology, כלם and בוש in 6:15) prevent the interpretation of Jer 6:13–15 as being an oracle of general indictment for the wrongdoings of the community. A better understanding points to the singling out of the religious leaders of Judah as the main culprits in the destruction brought to the nation by the enemy from the North.

Let us now go back to the settings of Jer 6:13–15. The “foe from the North” in the book of Jeremiah is identified with the Babylonian army of Nebuchadnezzar II, who invaded Palestine and besieged Jerusalem in 597 and 587. It has been argued that the main concern of the earliest oracles of the book of Jeremiah (Jer 2–6) was to find a theological explanation for the ominous events that beset the community and led to the loss of the kingdom and the deportation to

⁶³ For the unavailability of the shame-honour paradigm in the Hebrew Bible, see Johanna Stiebert, *The Construction of Shame in the Hebrew Bible: The Prophetic Contribution* (LHBOTS 346; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 108-9; Matthew J. Lynch, “Neglected Physical Dimensions of ‘Shame’ Terminology in the Hebrew Bible”, *Biblica* 91 (2010), 499-517.

⁶⁴ For an example of this attitude, see the use of the term כלם in Jer 14:3 to express the feelings of the servants who בשו והכלמו, “are full of shame and humiliation” and cover their heads because they could not find water during the drought; see Lynch, “Shame”, 509.

⁶⁵ However, this remains a common interpretation; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 258; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 69; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 104. More to the point seems to be Overholt’s interpretation of shame vocabulary in Jer 6:15. He observes that shame does not represent dishonour because of a sin but expresses the prophets and priests’ sense of confusion and uneasiness. He also argues that the terms בוש and כלם appear as a reaction to military destruction in 2 Kgs 19:26 and Jer 51:51; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 76.

⁶⁶ The idea of shame as a private experience, which must often be hidden from others, does not suit the occurrence of shame terminology in the Hebrew Bible, in which shame generally carries the idea of public repentance; see Lynch, “Shame”, 503.

Babylon.⁶⁷ Therefore, to assume for the composition of these verses a time prior to the fall of Jerusalem, or even between 597-587, seems dubious, as only the complete demise of Judah would have unveiled the promises of peace as falsehood and consequently led to the accusations aimed at those who spread a false sense of security in the nation. In the book of Jeremiah, the Babylonian invasion has been interpreted as the consequence of the continuous refusal of the people to listen to the word of YHWH. Along with this main aspect, which presents the sins of the rulers of Jerusalem and its inhabitants as the reason for YHWH's punishment, Jer 6:13–15 appears to represent a different strand of interpretation, which holds only the religious leaders to be responsible, while it worries about the people – עַמִּי, my people – for their severe, but disregarded, condition – שָׁבֵר, in 6:14.

Before concluding, here is a final comment on Jer 8:10b–12. Its insertion into Jer 8 is somewhat less remarkable than the correspondending addition of Jer 6:13–15. In Jer 6, the blaming of priests and prophets within the context of the “foe from the North” cycle, which reuses one of its key terms, שָׁבֵר, is clearly meant to put all the blame for the ruin of Judah on the clergy of Jerusalem. The context of Jer 8:8–10a, to which 8:10b–12 has been attached later, presents instead criticism of the scribes and the wise men, who have subverted YHWH's *tōrāh*. The similarities between Jer 6:12a and 8:10a, along with the general accusation of שָׁקֵר aimed at the scribes (Jer 8:8), obviously account for the insertion of Jer 8:10b–12, but here they are reused as stereotypical accusations. The aim is to heighten the charges against a group of self-styled experts of the law of YHWH, and therefore the ideological significance that the same materials have in Jer 6:13–15 was lost in the transmission.

2.3 What Will You Do When the End Comes? (Jer 5:30–31)

Prophets and priests are targeted in another passage of the core of Jeremiah, namely in Jer 5:30–31. In this text, the prophets are openly accused of falsehood (or to be more precise, they are accused of prophesying falsehood, נְבִיאֵי־שָׁקֵר) but the sin of the priests remains unclear. As regards the literary context in which Jer 5:30–31 recur, scholars have long acknowledged the composite nature of Jer 5 and agree in considering it to be a collection of discrete units, which

⁶⁷ Biddle has convincingly reconstructed the redactional interventions in Jer 2:1–4:4 as reinterpretations of Jer 4–6, which revolve around the dialectic of sin, punishment and forgiveness. Those who experienced the great catastrophe of 587 looked for a meaning in it, questioned the actions of the people, the kings and the religious class prior the fall and enquired about the role of YHWH in it; see Biddle, *Redaction History*, 82.

were later redacted together.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the extent of each saying is still debated, since it is not obvious how to separate one unit from another. The current study will work under the assumption that the outline of the chapter reads as follows: vv.1–6; 7–9; 10–11; 12–14; 15–17; 18–19; 20–25; 26–29; 30–31.⁶⁹

As regards the content of Jer 5, before it resumes the theme of the invading army from the North (vv.10–17), the text presents two discrete units which deal with the reasons for the destruction that will be wreaked upon Judah (vv.1–6, about the false sense of religion of the community; and vv.7–9, about idolatry). The final part of the chapter presents two separate poems which are aimed against the community; the first focuses on the sinfulness of all the people of Judah (vv.20–25), while the second one considers only the guilty men who have grown rich at the expenses of the poor (vv.26–29). The chapter closes with a short saying about the prophets and the priests (vv.30–31), which will constitute the focus of this analysis.

As regards the dating of these materials, some commentators accept the authorship of Jeremiah for all the sayings here comprised and date them to the reign of Josiah (or to the early years of his successor, Jehoiakim).⁷⁰ It must be said that the content of the chapter offers only a generalized denunciation of the nation, and such a commonly found topic cannot be framed in one single period of the history of Judah. However, the fact that these heterogeneous materials have been inserted in the middle of the “foe from the North” cycle seems to be an indicator that the Babylonian invasion provides the backdrop against which they should be read. In fact, most of this chapter acquires a better sense if one takes the accusations against

⁶⁸ As considered by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 41; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 56.; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 236; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 120; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 117; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 86; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 371.

⁶⁹ This is the division offered by Carroll, which appears to make good sense of the several literary layers that compose this text; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 173ff. Nonetheless, a great variety of outlines have been proposed, and some commentators consider only three separate oracles, as in vv.1–9; 10–19; 20–31; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 42; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 233ff; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 86ff; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 72ff; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 71ff. Others instead tend to isolate a greater number of smaller units that have been woven together to form a cohesive unit. Hence, Nicholson considers vv.1-6; 7–9; 10–14; 15–17; 18, 19; 20–25; 26–29; 30–31; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 57ff. Holladay isolates vv.1–9; 10–17; 18–19; 20–29; 30–31; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 173ff. McKane considers vv.1–6; 7–11; 12–14; 15–17; 18–19; 20–25; 26–29; 30–31; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 120ff. Jones on the other hand works with vv.1–11 (admitting the possibility of a break between vv.6 and 7); 10–14; 15–17; 18–19; 20–31; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 121ff. Finally, Lundbom works with vv.1–9; 10–13; 14–19; 20–25; 26–31; see Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, p.371ff.

⁷⁰ Such a solution is generally inferred by the focus on idolatry in v.7, which seems to fit in with the settings of Josiah’s religious reform; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 39, 42; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 235; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 175; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 87; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 120 (although he considers that Jer 5:20–31 belong to Jeremiah’s early career; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 127).

the community to explain retrospectively the events of 587.⁷¹ Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed because the people had forsaken YHWH (vv.1–6), practiced idolatry (vv.7–9), forgotten how fearful YHWH truly is (vv.20–25) and pursued unjust gain at the expenses of the lower classes (vv.26–29). The importance of the “foe from the North” cycle seems to be decisive also to explain the accusations aimed at priests and prophets in vv.30–31.

2.3.1 Translation, Critical Notes and Redaction History

30 An astonishing, a horrible thing has happened in the land. 31 The prophets prophesy lies and the priests rule at their hands and my people love so. What will you do at its end?

A horrible event (שַׁעֲרֹרָה) is happening in Judah (v.30); the prophets lie, the priests abuse their power, and the people accept this situation willingly (v.31). There is little doubt that Jer 5:30–31 represent a secondary addition that stands outside the structure of the previous poem.⁷² In fact, Jer 5:26–29 presents the blaming of some wicked men in the community, who ignore the situation of the poor and seek only their own personal gain. Conversely, Jer 5:30–31 addresses exclusively the prophets and the priests, who are never accused of greediness.

However, since Jer 5:29 reads identically to Jer 5:9, it has been suggested to consider a poem originally running in Jer 5:26–28, 30–31 and later reinterpreted by the addition of the editorial v.29, which broke the text into two units.⁷³ As regards this, establishing whether Jer 5:26–29 originally constituted a unit, or if a later redactor added v.29 in the longer Jer 5:26–28, 30–31,

⁷¹ Carroll rightly considers that most of Jer 5 consists of an attempt to give theological responses to the disaster of 587 (could Jerusalem have been spared if its inhabitants had behaved in a different manner?). Furthermore, he also argues that part of this chapter presents late post-exilic polemics, as the division of the people into pious and wicked points out (Jer 5:26–29; Isa 29:29–31; Ps 64), which for Carroll dates to the Persian period rather than the Neo-Babylonian one; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 116, 177, 189.

⁷² That Jer 5:30–31 are not connected to what precedes is maintained by Overholt, *Falsehood*, 73; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 65; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 250; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 190; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 136; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 200 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 95. Conversely, Bright sees the accusations against the religious class as the climax of the indictment of the community, and so does Jones; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 42; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 129.

⁷³ This is a solution proposed by Lundbom, who sees the unit Jer 5:26–28, 30–31 as a speech of YHWH to the people. He argues that the expunction of v.29 as an addition restores the harmony of the poem Jer 5:26–28, 30–31; “without v29 this is a nicely-balanced three-stanza poem with each stanza three colons in length”, in Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 406. However, the MT of Jer 5:26–28 presents both lexicographical and grammatical problems, along with a different transmission of v.28 in G, which weakens Lundbom’s reconstruction of an original, cohesive poem running in these verses. For a detailed discussion of the textual problems in Jer 5:26–28 and a comparison among the versions, see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 132ff.

cannot be proved with any certainty. However, it has been considered that the stereotypical phraseology seen in Jer 5:9, 29 and 9:9 (“should I not punish them for this? Should I not avenge myself?”) commonly concludes pericopes of judgement against the community, which may support the authenticity of Jer 5:29 as the original conclusion of the indictment against the wicked.⁷⁴ Given the difference in the target, it seems plausible to assume that Jer 5:30–31 represents an addition, triggered by the indictment of the community in the preceding verses, but which now concerns only the religious leaders of Judah.

As regards their content, Jer 5:30–31 present some difficulties. Different understandings as to the meaning of the expression נבא־בשקר “[the prophets] prophesy falsehood”, have been proposed. Moreover, the verb רדה that identifies the sin of the priests carries multiple meanings, which challenges the clarity of the charges against them. Finally, the syntactic referent for the pl. suffix in the expression על־ידיהם, “at their hands” is ambiguous and can relate either to the priests’ or to the prophets’ hands. Such a difference is not insignificant, since it effectively leads to divergent explanations as to the relationship between prophets and priests within this pericope. Each of these problems will be addressed in the following.

2.3.2 Prophesying Falsehood

As regards the expression “prophesying falsehood” in Jer 5:31, scholars have proposed different solutions. Some have considered that the term שקר in the book of Jeremiah can identify idolatrous practices (Jer 10:14; 16:19) and thus have taken Jer 5:31 as a reference to apostasy and idolatry. The word שקר would here stand as a reference to the “liar” par excellence, the Phoenician god Baal. In support of this argument, an analogy between the forms נבא that appear in Jer 2:8 and in 5:31 has been proposed. In Jer 2:8, the prophets are said to be prophesying בבעל, “by Baal”; in the second one, the same form is followed by בשקר, “by falsehood”. Hence, falsehood would recur as a personification of the god Baal.⁷⁵ However, it

⁷⁴ In his study on the use of rhetorical questions in the book of Jeremiah, Brueggemann observes that Jer 5:9, 29 read as sapiential formulae, which generally mark the end of units of indictment; see Brueggemann, “Jeremiah’s Use of Rhetorical Questions”, JBL 92 (1973), 364.

⁷⁵ This is the hypothesis proposed by Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT 12; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1947), 41. Bright considers this to be one of the possible solutions; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 41. Holladay and Lundbom accept it without reservation; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 201; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 410.

must be observed that the mention of Baal in the book of Jeremiah generally occurs within ritual contexts, which is not the case here,⁷⁶ and weakens the plausibility of this solution.

Others have interpreted prophesying falsehood in relation to the sins in Jer 5:26–28, thus it represents a generic fault that highlights how, among a sinful community, even the spiritual leaders are corrupted.⁷⁷ This solution appears to overlook the explicit connection made elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah between the term שקר and the theme of the invading army coming from the North (Jer 6:13–15). As stated above, the whole chapter offers theological reflections on the end of Jerusalem, and it seems obvious to connect Jer 5:31 to this theme, especially since the same feature and vocabulary appear in Jer 6:13–15. In addition, accusations that couple exclusively priests and prophets are generally rare in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 6:13; 8:10b and 23:11), and only within the “foe from the North” cycle are they connected with the idea of “falsehood”. This is not to say that the expression נבא שקר (Jer 5:31) is somehow equivalent to עשה שקר (Jer 6:13), but it evidently relates to the same literary context. Due to its placement in the “foe from the North” cycle, the falsehood of the prophets in Jer 5:31 should be inscribed in the framework of the demise of Jerusalem.

2.3.3 Priests at the Hands of the Prophets

The interpretation of the accusations aimed at the priests, on the other hand, is more difficult. The verb ירדו has generally been understood from the Hebrew רדה, which carries two meanings. The first meaning (I רדה) is “to rule”, while the second one (II רדה) is “to scrape out”. Most scholars opt for I רדה,⁷⁸ while only a few have considered II רדה to be the right solution.⁷⁹ As regards these latter cases, a parallel form in Judg 14:9⁸⁰ has prompted some scholars to

⁷⁶ The god Baal recurs 13 times in the book of Jeremiah, and his worshipping on the behalf of the Israelites generally includes mention of high places, altars, and burnt and incense offerings (Jer 7:9; 9:14; 11:13, 17; 19:5; 32:29, 35).

⁷⁷ Overholt, who considers the prophets in Jer 5:31 as proclaiming their own words instead of those of YHWH or of another deity, favours this solution; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 74. Likewise, J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 251 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 97. Similarly, Stulman considers Jer 5:20–29 as a list of infractions of the Mosaic law, which culminate in vv.30–31 with the religious leaders’ support of such infractions; see Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 75.

⁷⁸ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 41; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 251; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 190; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 137; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 95; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 129; Tiemeyer, “The Priests and the Temple Cult”, 236.

⁷⁹ However, as it was suggested to me during the defence of this doctoral thesis, given the *dagesh forte* inside the *daleth* in the verbal form ירדו, a derivation from a geminate root such as רדד (with a meaning like רדה) may be an even sounder possibility.

⁸⁰ The famous episode of Samson and the honey in the carcass of the lion; MT reads ויירדו אל-כפיו “[Samson] scooped out [the honey] with his hands”.

understand the expression to mean, “the priests scrape out in their hands”, implying that the corrupted priests are accepting bribes in their hands.⁸¹ However, this interpretation seems to be excessively dependent on the content of Jer 5:26–28, where the corrupt leaders are bribed to subvert the verdicts of trials. The emendation of the Masoretic text has also been suggested, reading ירו, “they teach”, instead of ירדו, implying that the priests have taught according to their own norms,⁸² but this solution relies too strongly on an unjustified change of the text.⁸³ Finally, II רדה has been taken as presenting an act of conscious renunciation of the sacred office on the behalf of the priests, but also this solution appears to read too much in the text.⁸⁴ Hence, the reading in this instance should favour the meaning I רדה.

However, the understanding of the Hebrew ירדו, although it has been the subject of a long debate, does not seem too big an issue for the understanding of Jer 5:31. What really has plagued scholars is the referent of the expression על-ידיהם, “at their hands”. It makes indeed a great deal of difference to understand whose hands they are, if of the prophets’ or of the priests’. The relationship between priests and prophets in this text is not clear and is open to different interpretations,⁸⁵ but a greater sense is gained if the priests are considered to be ruling according to the directions of the prophets.⁸⁶ Scholars who oppose this reconstruction have generally raised two objections. Firstly, given what we know (namely, what the Bible tells us) of the religious environment of Judah, there is no evidence of the priests ever having received

⁸¹ This is the solution proposed by Duhm, *Jeremiah*, 64.

⁸² See Rudolph, *Jeremiah*, 64.

⁸³ Rudolph’s conjectural emendation has generally been dismissed by commentators; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 40; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 64; Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 247; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 189; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 136; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 199; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 94; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 129. Conversely, Tiemeyer welcomes his suggestion and considers the fault of the priests to have led the people astray with their teaching; see Tiemeyer, “The Priests and the Temple Cult”, 237.

⁸⁴ Holladay, departing from Duhm’s hypothesis, translates, “the priests – they deconsecrate themselves”. He considers the pronominal suffix to be referring to the closest subject – thus, the hands of the priests – and understands the verb II רדה to be part of an idiom that implies the dismissing of the priests’ own investiture. Since the phrase, “they have filled your hands” is supposed to be said at a priest’s consecration, the fact that the priests fill their own hands *themselves* would imply a rejection of their sacred office; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 200. However, the idiom at the basis of Holladay’s solution is unattested anywhere else. McKane defines his reconstruction “an improbable one” (*Jeremiah vol.1*, 137) and so does Tiemeyer (“The Priests and the Temple Cult”, 236).

⁸⁵ A point that some scholars rightly stress; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 41; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 190; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 95.

⁸⁶ Bright deems this rendition plausible among others, see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 41, while Jones considers it the most suitable in the context, since the prophets are considered the main culprits; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 130. Others consider that Jer 5:31 presents the priests conspiring with the prophets, see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 65; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 137;

directives from prophets.⁸⁷ Secondly, from a grammatical point of view, the suffix pronoun is more likely to be referring to the same subject as the preceding verb.⁸⁸

In addressing the first objection, we need to clear the field of a traditional cliché, namely the dichotomy between priests and prophets. Any hypotheses that rely on the strict division between cultic specialists should be dismissed, as scholars have successfully supported the intersecting nature of the duties of priests, prophets and other temple officials in the Levant.⁸⁹ That given, we should also avoid any confusion when considering the literary depiction of priests and prophets as it appears in the Hebrew Bible, and the historical and social interactions between religious specialists all over the Levant area.⁹⁰ In the ancient Near East, the simplest common denominator for all religious specialists is to act as intermediaries between the human and the divine spheres. Thus, a hierarchy for the cultic officials is not to be found in their specific roles but in their proximity to centres of power.⁹¹ Hence, this first objection seems to be based on a partial or, to some degree, fallacious reconstruction of the relationship that existed between religious specialists. As for the second objection, the case seems baseless; it appears plausible for the possessive pronoun to be slightly separated from its direct referent in two independent clauses, so both solutions are equally possible.⁹²

As we see, despite its apparent simplicity, this text presents many difficulties in its interpretation, being open to different understandings. As regards this, the subordinate role of the priests may depend on the interpretation of the reader, whereas the charges aimed at the religious officials undoubtedly relate to the fall of Jerusalem. The coupling of priests and prophets, the accusations of falsehood and the reference to a forthcoming end cannot together

⁸⁷ Holladay and Tiemeyer, who both reject the possibility that the priest could be inferior to the prophets, make this point; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 201; Tiemeyer, "The Priests and the Temple Cult", 236.

⁸⁸ See Tiemeyer, "The Priests and the Temple Cult", 236.

⁸⁹ See Grabbe, *Priests – Prophets*, 220 and Ehud Ben Zvi, "Observations on Prophetic Characters, Prophetic Texts, Priests of Old, Persian Period Priests and Literati", in Grabbe & Alice Ogden Bellis (eds.), *The Priests in the Prophets: The Portrayal of Priests, Prophets and Other Religious Specialists in the Latter Prophets* (JSOTSup 408; London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 26. Moreover, the exacerbated antagonism between priests and prophets (and between pre-classical and classical prophets) is not only a literary creation, but it also seems to emerge as a paradigm exclusively in early Christian literature and in the writings of the Church Fathers of the Late Antiquity, as argued by Ziony Zevit, "The Prophets Versus the Priests", in *The Priests in the Prophets*, 213.

⁹⁰ See the analogue discussion as to the difference between ancient Near Eastern prophecy and biblical prophecy in Section 3, ch. 1.

⁹¹ See Grabbe, *Priests – Prophets*, 220.

⁹² As regards this, Tiemeyer does not cite any grammars to support her objection but brings the traditions of G and V of Jer 5:31 to support it, since they understand the referent of the pl. suffix to be the priests; see Tiemeyer, "The Priests and the Temple Cult", 236. However, if that is the case, Syr and T clearly consider the prophets to be the referent, which simply reinforces the impossibility of a unique interpretation of Jer 5:31. Between two nominal subjects, a pronoun suffix might be preceded by its direct referent, but this does not represent the only (or more probable) circumstance; see Gesenius' discussion of nouns with pronominal suffixes in GKC §91a-q.

be regarded as part of a general accusation against the community. These elements reprise the context of Jer 6:13–15 and present once again the misconduct of the religious class as the cause of the fall of Jerusalem. Nonetheless, Jer 5:31 offers quite an interesting distinction. If the prophets are the only ones who lied, and their lies have influenced the ruling of the priests (thus, the referent of *על־ידיהם* are the prophets and not the priests), then the accusations aimed at the priesthood are here attenuated. Since the priests limited themselves to obeying to the directive of the prophets, they were oblivious of their own contribution to destruction of Jerusalem. This is a remarkable variance, if one considers that in all the following excerpts relating to the promises of peace, the priests are no longer mentioned.

2.4 Drought and Invasion (Jer 14:11–16)

The charges aimed at the prophets in Jer 14 (especially in vv.13–16) are placed outside the literary borders of the “foe from the North” cycle, but they are evidently connected to the themes of warfare and invasion, so need to be addressed here. In this next excerpt, both promises of peace and falsehood turn up again, and the prophets are the only object of reproof. Priests and prophets are coupled together elsewhere in Jer 14 (Jer 14:18bβ),⁹³ but this verse does not convey any attack on the religious class, and does not mention either falsehood nor peace, so that there is no connection with this motif.⁹⁴ As regards the literary context in which the blaming of the prophets appears in Jer 14, scholars have generally taken a long and

⁹³ In the MT, Jer 14:18bβ reads as follow, *גַּם־נְבִיא גַּם־כֹּהֵן סָחְרוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ וְלֹא יָדְעוּ*, “both the prophet and the priest wander in a land they do not know”. The meaning of this verse is uncertain due to the ambiguity of the verb *סחר*, which relates to the idea of travelling and roaming, but in the participle sometimes points to actions such as trading and doing business (e.g. Gen 23:16; 37:28). Any interpretation of the actions of priests and prophets is therefore conjectural; see note 94 below.

⁹⁴ Scholars have treated the expression *סחרו* in Jer 14:18bβ differently, according to the two meanings conveyed by the verb. J. Thompson, Holladay and Craigie connect the actions of priests and prophets to the idea of “doing business”; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 384; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 437 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 203. However, of the three, only Holladay argues for a strongly negative depiction of the religious class in this verse (Holladay’s rendition is, “for both prophet and priest peddle their wares”, in *Jeremiah 1*, 436), on the assumption that in Jeremiah prophets and priests are always attacked or belittled when coupled together. However, Speiser, comparing equivalent terminology in Aramaic and Akkadian, has convincingly argued that in the finite form, the verb *סחר* simply means, “wander freely” and the meaning of the participle form in the sphere of trading is a secondary development; see Ephraim A. Speiser, “The word *SHR* in Genesis”, *BASOR* 164 (1961), 23-8. Similarly, also Carroll rightly considers that the environment depicted in Jer 14:1–15:9, afflicted by drought and war, is not very suitable for any forms of trading, whether licit or illicit; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 316. That given, and notwithstanding the difficulties of the verse, it seems safer to consider Jer 14:18bβ (and the whole unit Jer 14:17–18) a depiction of the religious leaders at a loss in exile (“in a land they do not know”, Jer 14:18). This interpretation is favoured by Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 146; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 101; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 134; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 315; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 330; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 212 and Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 713.

homogenous section in Jer 14:1–15:9,⁹⁵ known as “the great drought liturgy”.⁹⁶ This section presents a long lament of Jeremiah in times of national emergency, which is represented mostly by a severe drought (Jer 14:1–6, 19–22).

Due to minor similarities between this lament and other liturgical forms (e.g. Joel 2:18–27), some scholars have argued that the “historical” Jeremiah, in this particular instance, may have acted as a “cult prophet”, invoking YHWH’s forgiveness on behalf of his land and his fellow citizens.⁹⁷ Conversely, others have considered that this passage rather represents an “imitation liturgy”, in which the “historical” Jeremiah is not advocating the cause of the people, but rather invoking a punishment from YHWH (Jer 14:7–10), and in so doing he is mocking and overturning the rhetoric of mourning.⁹⁸ However, it is questionable that the form of this passage may represent some sort of liturgy at all.⁹⁹ Moreover, the theme of the drought is evidently uneven in the section Jer 14:1–15:9, since it appears only in 14:1–10, 19–22. In fact, Jer 14:11–16; 15:3–9 do not deal with the drought but foreshadow the coming of an invading army, so they deal with another theme that is independent from the drought materials.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, titles such as “the great drought liturgy” are inaccurate for the content of Jer 14.

⁹⁵ There are however some disagreements in scholarship as to the extent of this unit. Some consider Jer 14:1–15:9; see Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 143; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 419; Clements, *Jeremiah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988) 90; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 195. Others instead take only Jer 14:1–15:4; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 97; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 130; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 178; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 375; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 315. Nonetheless, since the composite nature of Jer 14:1–15:4(9) is beyond doubt, it seems safer to also include the lament Jer 15:5–9 in this series of oracles about war and drought, due to evident similarities in tone and theme. Thus, when referring to the broader section, Jer 14:1–15:9 will be considered.

⁹⁶ Reventlow first coined this definition; see Henning Reventlow, *Liturgie und Prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963) 186. It has been widely adopted in several commentaries; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 101; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 129; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 375; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 418.

⁹⁷ This is the understanding of Reventlow, *Liturgie*, 186; Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction Including Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and also the Works of Similar Type from Qumran: The History of the formation of the Old Testament* (trans. by Peter R. Ackroyd; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 356 and Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 128. Bright considers this as a sound possibility, although conjectural; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 104.

⁹⁸ This is the opinion of Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 85; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 422 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 200.

⁹⁹ Kessler rightly considers that this lament does not have the structure or the function of a liturgy, but rather reads as a post-exilic sermon which is meant to highlight and justify the role of YHWH during past events, thus indirectly prompting the people to acknowledge the opportunity of redemption they have been given; see Martin Kessler, “From Drought to Exile: A morphological study of Jer 14:1–15:4”, *PSBL* (1972), 520. Also questioning the nature of the text as a liturgy are McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 322; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 307; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 204.

¹⁰⁰ That the drought and the military invasion represent two separate themes in Jer 14 is considered by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 103; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 101; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 178; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 307; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 324.

Since the themes of drought and war have only later been intertwined in the section Jer 14:1–15:9, it is preferable to address them separately.¹⁰¹ Moreover, a large number of discrete literary units (either about drought or war) must be assumed,¹⁰² and scholars have come to different solutions as regards the division of Jer 14:1–15:9.¹⁰³ The text here proposed covers Jer 14:11–16, as it is open to debate whether these verses represent a cohesive unit of indictment of the prophets or, according to the argument here proposed, Jer 14:13–16 represents a secondary addition triggered by the references to war, famine and plague in Jer 14:12.

Finally, in Jer 14:1–15:9, there are no external referents for dating, although it seems likely that at least the verses relating to the military invasion (Jer 14:11–18; 15:1–9), which presuppose the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity in Babylon, look retrospectively to these events and come from later times.¹⁰⁴ The theme of drought refers to such a common event in the ancient world that it cannot be dated with any precision. Literary reflections as to this theme may come from earlier times, and the redactors who developed the Jeremianic tradition may

¹⁰¹ For example, Nicholson works with a lament about the drought in Jer 14:1–10 and one about military invasion in 14:11–15:4, the latter one produced by a Deuteronomistic hand; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 128. Others consider the first lament to be longer, as in Jer 14:1–17a, while the second one in 14:17b–15:9; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 384; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 199 (who admits that the two themes are not easily separated, 200).

¹⁰² The largely composite nature of Jer 14:1–15:4(9) is accepted by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 102; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 128; Thiel, *Redaktion*, 178; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 315ff; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 307.

¹⁰³ Bright considers an original poem about the drought in Jer 14:2–10, 19–22, lacking its original conclusion and later expanded by Jeremiah himself with the insertion of further reflections on the military invasion (e.g. Jer 14:11–16; 15:1–4); see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 103. Similarly, Thiel considers the units about warfare to be a later Deuteronomistic expansion on the lament Jer 14:2–10; see Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 178–82. McKane considers three major units, namely Jer 14:1–10; 11–16; 17–15:4; see McKane, 315ff. Carroll, although admitting that other solutions are possible due to the fluid nature of the section, works with 14:1–6; 7–9; 10–12; 13–16; 17–18; 19–22; 15:1–4; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 307.

¹⁰⁴ As regards this, Thiel and Nicholson both consider a Deuteronomistic hand behind all the excerpts that refer to the military invasion; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 128; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 178–82. McKane questions Jeremiah's authorship for 14:2–10 and considers that Jer 14:11–16 hints at the defeat of Judah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and makes use of Deuteronomic materials (Deut 18:20) to reinforce the depiction of Jeremiah as a true prophet. For McKane, both these elements are exilic; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 327. Carroll (following Kessler), considers the whole section as a collection of retrospective theological reflections as to the role of YHWH, the people and the prophets in the light of the events of 587; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 313–15. Similarly, also Stulman holds that the strand of accusations against the prophets reflects a post-exilic polemic; see Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 143. In contrast with these views, J. Thompson (following an older argument made by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 103) argues that, although editing is evident in the section, Jeremiah should be considered to be the author of Jer 14:1–15:4 in its entirety. For J. Thompson, all the elements in the section are well-rooted in the Jeremianic tradition, especially in the older parts of the book (Jer 2–6), so a dating before the first siege of Jerusalem in 597 would be preferred; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 378. Similarly, also Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 444.

have reworked and inserted them in the book as part of the oracles ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah only later.

2.4.1 Translation, Critical Notes, Redaction History

11 And YHWH said to me, do not pray for the good of this people. 12 Even if they fast, I will not hear their cry; if they offer a burnt offering or a grain offering, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with sword, famine and plague. 13 And I said, Alas, Lord YHWH, behold! The prophets are telling them: you will not see sword and there will not be famine for you, because an enduring peace¹⁰⁵ I will grant to you in this place. 14 And YHWH said to me, the prophets are saying falsehood in my name; I have not sent them, nor have I commanded them and spoken to them. A vision of falsehood and a divination of emptiness¹⁰⁶ and the deceit¹⁰⁷ of their hearts they are prophesying to them.¹⁰⁸ 15 Therefore, thus says YHWH about the prophets that prophesy in my name and who I have not sent and yet they are saying sword and famine will not come upon this land; these prophets will die for the sword and the famine. 16 And the people to whom they have prophesied will be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem to face the famine and the sword; without anyone for them to bury them, their wives, their sons, their daughters, and I will turn against them their own evil.

The passage Jer 14:11–16 presents a cohesive text and many commentators assume that these verses are a secondary layer which was meant to expand YHWH's response in 14:10.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ The MT reads שלום אמת, "peace of truth", with the term שלום used in juxtaposition with an object to specify its designation (e.g. שלום ירושלם, "the peace of Jerusalem", in Ps 122:6); however, it reads odd in this instance. Conversely, G inverts the order and reads a hendiadys, ἀλήθειαν καὶ εἰρήνην, "truth and peace", and so does Syr and some other Hebrew manuscripts. A similar expression, which is closer to the reading of G, שלום ואמת, "peace and truth", appears also in Jer 33:6. Given the testimony of the versions, a reading of the term אמת in a construct state to express an attribute of the term שלום, thus meaning "a true peace", as in, a peace that will endure, should be favoured (see GKC §128 o-p); see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 98; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 130; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 376; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 420; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 313; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 325; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 198; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 707.

¹⁰⁶ Reading the *Qere* אליל instead of the *K^etib* אלול.

¹⁰⁷ Reading the *Qere* תרמית instead of the *K^etib* תרמות.

¹⁰⁸ The text presents the pronoun לכם, "to you", while T and other Hebrew manuscripts read להם, "to them". McKane prefers this latter reading, which he deems more consistent in a dialogue between YHWH and his prophet; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 324. Similarly, also Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 131 and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 315. Others leave MT unchanged; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 101; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 383; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 420; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 198; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 167. The emendation should be applied, as it is well-supported by the testimonies and the sense of the passage demands it.

¹⁰⁹ This is the opinion of Bright, *Jeremiah*, 103; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 130; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 178; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 377; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 324; Clements, *Jeremiah*, 90.

Some commentators even opt to include v.10 in this layer,¹¹⁰ but this is rather a fragment on its own, which was inserted to conclude the plea of the people running in Jer 14:7–9.¹¹¹ However, Jer 14:11–12 probably represents a unit on its own, which is separated from what precedes and follows. As regards this, the bicolon Jer 14:11–12 focuses on the people, while vv.13–16 focus on the prophets alone, so that they may deal with two different topics.¹¹² However, since Jer 14:13–16 ends with the fate of the people and the prophets together (Jer 14:16), this divergence may not be enough to divide Jer 14:11–16 into two units.

What really calls for this separation is that the bicolon Jer 14:11–12 presents many stereotypical features which are observed elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah as a generic introduction to YHWH's punishment, and as such reads as a self-standing unit. The command not to pray for the sake of the people appears also in Jer 7:16 and 11:14, without ever being connected to the faults of the prophets, and simply seems to convey the idea that the deity's plan for his people is for evil and not for good. Similarly, the words "sword, famine and plague" represent a stereotype in the prose of the book of Jeremiah to introduce disaster. As regards this latter element, it has been suggested that the series "sword, famine and plague" is integral to the blaming of the prophets throughout the book of Jeremiah,¹¹³ but this understanding seems to be incorrect.

In fact, references to "sword, famine and plague" (sometimes in the shorter "sword and famine") are not so frequently connected to the prophets (this only happens in Jer 5:12; 14:12; 27:8, 13). Usually, this triad points to the general ravages of war (Jer 11:21–22; 16:4), and even more often explicitly points to the Babylonian invasion and the subsequent captivity (Jer 15:2;

¹¹⁰ Thus, Volz and Holladay work with the unit Jer 14:10–16, while Craigie considers 14:10–17a; see Paul Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament 10; Leipzig: Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Scholl, 1928), 165; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 423 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1–25*,

¹¹¹ As regards the editorial origin of Jer 14:10, it should be observed that Jer 14:7–9 are directly addressed to YHWH, but then v.10 presents a reference to the deity in 3rd person sing., which reads awkward and inconsistently, to the point that some have proposed the deletion of v.10b to preserve the unit vv.7–10a; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 129. In addition, v.10 clearly reprises the poetic form of the preceding unit, while vv.11–12 are in prose, so that it should not be considered part of the following unit either. Carroll, although proposing the unit 14:10–12, admits that the text could be divided into different sub-sections, even separating v.10 from the others; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 312.

¹¹² This observation is made by Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 85 and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 314. Likewise, Stulman opts for the separation of Jer 14:11–12 from what follows, although he works with a longer unit in vv.13–18; see Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 143.

¹¹³ Miller considers that these words (sword, famine and plague), being so common in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, may have constituted a prophetic slogan which arose during the times of these prophets; see Miller, *Das Verhältnis*, 86. Similarly, Weippert argues that the compact series "sword, famine and plague" belongs to the vocabulary of the "historical" Jeremiah as part of the rhetoric of the conflict against the other prophets, and only later became an expression which represents total destruction; see Weippert, *Die Prosaderen*, 146. Craigie welcomes both suggestions; see Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 202. Similarly, also Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 390.

21:7–9; 24:10; 29:17, 19; 32:24; 38:2; 42:16–17, 22; 44:12). It seems evident that in most of the cases, the expression “sword, famine and plague” represents an editorial link to the Babylonian invasion, and not to the blaming of the prophets. In addition, in the book of Jeremiah, there are passages that present accusations against the prophets, but which do not mention “sword, famine and plague” (Jer 6:13–15; 23:16–22; 28; 37:19). Finally, it must be considered that the coming of war and famine also appears as a punishment for not having proclaimed the liberty of brothers and neighbours every seven years, which could hardly be part of any prophetic conflict (Jer 34:17). Thus, the expression introduces a generic punishment in the form of a military invasion. This is to say that Jer 14:11–12 is a stereotypical introduction to the theme of punishment of the nation through warfare, and thus it should not be considered part of the indictment of the prophets, but rather its trigger.

The accuracy of this consideration is proven by the fact that the theme of war in Jer 14:11–15:9 mostly revolves around the fate of Judah and its people, and only marginally (Jer 14:13–16) includes or targets the prophets. It is sound to conclude that the accusations aimed at the prophets are a redactional intervention triggered by the mention of a military invasion (as was the case in Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15), rather than assuming that the theme of war in Jer 14 is inserted specifically to attack the prophets.¹¹⁴ The two stereotypical motifs in Jer 14:11–12 (namely, “do not pray for this people” in v.11, and “sword, famine and plague” in v.12) reinforce the idea that nothing can be done to save the nation, so they are not intrinsically connected to the following verses. If anything, they elaborate on the content of v.10,¹¹⁵ rather than being part of a layer that holds the prophets responsible for the grave situation in Judah, a theme that appears only in 14:13–16.

¹¹⁴ *Contra* McKane, who argues for a thematic connection between the lament for the drought in Jer 14:2–10 and the fate of the people in 14:11–16. McKane posits that emergencies such as drought or war, in order to be resolved, necessitate YHWH’s intercession; however, the *shalom* prophets only claimed to be able to provide it, but in the end did not deliver. Thus, McKane deems appropriate the focus on their roles in connection with a climate of national emergency, especially since the agenda of the editors is meant to present Jeremiah as the only true intercessor towards YHWH; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 328. Jones also follows a similar line of thought; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 204, 209. Although generally valid, McKane’s assertions overlook the fact that the text never considers an intervention of the prophets as a necessity for the land, but rather implies that all the people should repent to regain YHWH’s favour (Jer 14:7–9). Similarly, the role of the prophets in Jer 14:13–16 could relate to the theme of intercession simply because YHWH forbids Jeremiah to pray for the people in a passage that belongs to another source (Jer 14:11).

¹¹⁵ As regards this, Thiel observes that Jer 14:11–12 has been stitched to v.10 to function as a bridge for the new theme, namely *shalom* prophecy, which is meant to mitigate the people’s guilt; see Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 183. This observation is corrected to the extent that vv.11–12 are clearly introductory, but they seem to introduce the wider theme of the ravages of war and the exile (Jer 14:17–18; 15:1–4; 5–9), which is the trigger for the reprimand against the prophets who are held responsible for such disasters, and not necessarily the other way around.

2.4.2 Origins of Prophetic Conflicts

The content of Jer 14:13–16 shows many analogies with the accusations aimed at priests and prophets encountered within the “foe from the North” cycle. Firstly, the presence of the word שקר, “falsehood”, appears as the main fault, so much so that the majority of commentators considers this passage yet another expression of the conflict between Jeremiah and the so-called “false” prophets.¹¹⁶ Secondly, the message that has misled the people once again revolves around a deceptive sense of security (שלום אמת, “enduring peace”, in Jer 14:13) while, in fact, they are on the verge of war and invasion. Thirdly, the context in which these further accusations recur is clearly that of the threat of the enemy from the North. The text of Jer 14:11–18, especially Jer 14:12, is about warfare and presents peculiar terminology from the “foe from the North”. The expressions שבר גדול, “great destruction” (Jer 6:1, 14), and בת-עמי, “the daughter of my people” (Jer 6:14, 26), are reprised in Jer 14:17. Similarly, the reference to the sword in the fields (Jer 6:25) then appears in Jer 14:18. Given such similarities in context and vocabulary, the fact that the theme of the military invasion in Jer 14:11–15:9 alludes and reprises the “foe from the North” appears certain.¹¹⁷

As it now stands, the collection Jer 14:1–15:9 presents theological reflections about two catastrophes that have stricken the land, namely, drought (Jer 14:2–10) and military invasion (Jer 14:11–15:9) and focuses primarily on the role that YHWH played in them. In this context, the content of Jer 14:13–16 clearly stands out as another example of the peculiar strand that considers only the religious class responsible for the troubles of the nation (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15). Specifically, a literary connection between Jer 14:13–16 and Jer 6:13–15 seems to be implied by shared terminology and context, showing that the hand responsible for the insertion of the accusations aimed at the prophets in Jer 14 hinted at the similar materials already seen in the core of the book of Jeremiah.¹¹⁸

Besides, since Jer 14:13–16 is a later passage, it presents expansion and innovation on what we may call its models. Following a trend already observed in Jer 5:30–31, the involvement of the priests into spreading falsehood and misleading the people during the Babylonian invasion

¹¹⁶ That Jer 14:13–16 should be taken as another *locus* for the conflict of Jeremiah against the “false” prophets, along with Jer 6:13–15, is the opinion of Hubert Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah: Introduction and Commentary* (The Torch Bible Commentaries; London: SCM Press, 1960), 117; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 29; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 132; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 184; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 382; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 435; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 327; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 143 and Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 707.

¹¹⁷ As considered by J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 378; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 327; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 314; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 143.

¹¹⁸ See Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 200, 203; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 210; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 171.

has been reassessed and finally omitted, and only the prophets are now charged with such misconduct. It is indeed difficult to establish why, at some point, the involvement of the priests in such accusations was abandoned. It has been suggested that the emergency of a new priestly class in post-exilic times could have prompted the exclusion of the priests from the responsibilities of having caused the fall of Jerusalem. This new, emergent clergy did not want to be associated with the mistakes of their predecessors.¹¹⁹ This is certainly a sound possibility, especially if one considers that the motif of promising false peace appeared to connect the actions of the religious class pre-587 to the demise of Judah and the exile.¹²⁰

In addition, more details are given as to the fallacy and unreliability of their oracles, which were introduced with vague expressions in the previous passages, such as גְּבֹאֲרֵי־שִׁקָּר, “[the prophets] prophesy falsehood”, in Jer 5:31; and כָּלֹ עֲשֵׂה שִׁקָּר, “everyone commits falsehood”, in Jer 6:15;). In Jer 14:14, the negative status of the prophets and their oracles is directly addressed. Their words are false because YHWH never entitled them to speak his message. Thus, not only are they lying to the people, but they are also abusing the name of YHWH (בְּשִׁמִּי, “in my name”, Jer 14:14). The threefold rejection of the prophets (in Jer 14:14, לֹא שְׁלַחְתִּים וְלֹא, “not sent and not”) is even harsher as YHWH demeans their prophetic gifts, along with their boastful claims of affiliation with him. The power that these prophets are considering valuable means of foreseeing the future of Judah is quickly dismissed as a “vision of falsehood” (חֲזוֹן שִׁקָּר) and a “divination of emptiness” (קֶסֶם וְאֵלִיל).

The terms חֲזוֹן, “vision”, and the verb חָזָה, “to see”, are often associated with prophecy (Lam 2:9; Jer 23:16; Ezek 7:26, 13:6–9; Mic 3:6) and are generally considered genuine *media* of foreseeing (Gen 15:1; Num 24:4, 16; 2 Sam 7:17; Hos 12:10).¹²¹ It is interesting to notice that the term does not imply that YHWH will send a proper vision, but rather his words.¹²² The juxtaposition between חֲזוֹן and שִׁקָּר seems to point out that the *medium* is legitimate. Similarly, the term קֶסֶם, “divination” is used in apposition with the substantive אֵלִיל, “emptiness,

¹¹⁹ This is a solution proposed by Garbini, who considers that the accusations aimed at the pre-exilic priests began to annoy the new clergy which emerged after the return from Babylon, so the paradigm of accusation was changed to accuse only the prophets; see Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116. It should be considered that any priestly group in charge of the temple and the cult was also in charge of the literature produced in said temple, so this kind of control over the tradition appears likely; see Ben Zvi, “Prophetic Characters”, 20–24.

¹²⁰ For the reconstruction of a suitable historical context for the emergency of a new clergy, see Section 5 in ch. 3.

¹²¹ See A. Jepsen, “חזה”, in TDOT 4, 284, 287.

¹²² Compare Gen 15:1, in which YHWH sends his words to Abraham בַּמַּחֲזָה, in a vision; and 2 Sam 7:4, 17, in which Nathan, during the night, receives the word of YHWH (2 Sam 7:4) and later reports to David כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, “all these words and this entire vision” (2 Sam 7:17); for further examples, see Jepsen, “285”, חזה.

worthlessness”, which in the Hebrew Bible is sometimes used to refer to apostasy and idolatry (Lev 19:4). However, the practices identified by the word קסם are widely condemned within the Hebrew Bible and are associated with magic, sorcery and other forbidden practices (Deut 18:10; 1 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 17:17; Isa 44:25).¹²³ Given the juxtaposition with negative qualifications (such as emptiness and falsehood), it seems safe to infer that the problem with these prophets is not in the *media* they use to prophesy, but in the very fact that YHWH is not the source of their messages. In fact, they are expressing the deceit of their minds (תרמית לבם, in Jer 14:14).

All these elements instantly recall the depiction of the illegitimate prophets in Deut 18:18–20 and some have considered these verses to be the model for the attack on the prophets in Jer 14, since these two texts appear to show the same concerns about the nature of prophecy.¹²⁴ This conclusion is substantially correct, although some clarifications are needed. The recurrence of some key vocabulary reinforces the idea that the author of Jer 14:13–16 had Deut 18:20–22 in mind; in fact Deut 18:20a reads, “a prophet who presumes to speak in my name (בשמי) anything I have not commanded (לא־צויתיו)”, and Deut 18:22a, לא־דברו יהוה, “YHWH has not spoken it”). Nonetheless, it must be considered that the core of the accusations aimed at the prophets in Jer 14:13–16 has nothing to do with Deut 18:18–22, which seems mostly concerned with fulfilment as proof of a legitimate word of YHWH.¹²⁵ In Jer 14:13–16, the prophets are accused of having promised “peace”, which was a lie, and this element can only come from Jer 6:13–15.

Two separate literary traditions lay the ground for Jer 14:13–16. On the one hand, the content of the message of the prophets, peace and falsehood, is based on the strand that belongs to the “foe from the North” cycle and the promises of peace. On the other, the influence of Deut 18:18–22 is predominant in structuring the prophets’ falsehood. They did not receive a message from YHWH, and yet they dared to speak in his name (Deut 18:20; Jer 14:14–15). However, presenting the separation of “true” and “false” prophets does not seem a concern in Jer 14:13–16. This passage reads as general accusations aimed at the prophetic class, and

¹²³ See Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Magic”, in ABD 4, 486; L. Ruppert, “קסם”, in TDOT 14, 73.

¹²⁴ This is the understanding of Nicholson, who deems there to be a Deuteronomistic author behind the entirety of Jer 14:11–16; see Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 101–2. Similar conclusions are reached by Thiel, *Redaktion 1–25*, 185. Carroll, following especially Thiel, concludes that Jer 14:14 presents an understanding of prophecy similar to that of Deut 18:20–22, as both passages consider YHWH’s appointment the most distinctive element for the legitimate prophetic gift; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 315. Also, Jones considers the prose of Jer 14:14–16 Deuteronomistic; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 210.

¹²⁵ See Section 2 in ch. 1.

simply reinforces the charges seen in Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15. The context still refers to the enemy coming from the North, and the accusation is the same as before, namely, promising peace while on the verge of disaster, although in Jer 14:13–16 the aim appears to be to explain why the words of the prophets are false. By reusing the content and context of Jer 6:13–15, and by referring to the criteria established in Deut 18:20–22, Jer 14:13–16 addresses and explains the falsehood of the prophetic class. However, the endorsement of YHWH as the sign of legitimate prophecy is an ideological criterion and not a practical one; in fact, how the people (or a prophet himself) could understand whether a prophetic message came from YHWH or not, is never addressed in the text. Nonetheless, a first step in the construction of the conflicts in terms of prophet vs. prophet has been made with Jer 14:13–16. The admission that YHWH does not support all the prophets opens the door to the dichotomy between those who truly speak his words and those who do not, in the book of Jeremiah. These terms refer, of course, exclusively to an ideological conflict, because at its core this dispute never points to establishing objectively the status of prophecy and prophets, but always reduces the argument to a tautology (the prophets that speak falsehood are “false” prophets, and they are “false” prophet because they speak falsehood) to serve ideological polemics.

2.5 The Religious Class and the Foe from the North – Observations

The analysis has highlighted that the promises of peace and the accusations of falsehood against the religious class in Jeremiah must be considered against the background of the Babylonian invasion and the fall of Jerusalem (the “foe from the North” cycle). This literary strand aims to give an interpretation of the ominous events that led to the loss of the kingdom. Specifically, the ideology that underpins the promises of peace targets the priests and the prophets as the main culprits, because of the false sense of security they spread in the nation. Nonetheless, it seems that at some point the position of the priests has been remedied, as they are treated more indulgently in Jer 5:30–31 and are not even considered in Jer 14:13–16. The falsehood of the prophets is only addressed in the last of the three excerpts, Jer 14:13–16; up to that point, nothing in the text suggests that a differentiation among prophets (or priests!) needed to be considered, because the accusations are aimed at all the religious class. Besides, even the argument reused from Deut 18:20–22 to separate legitimate and illegitimate prophetic gifts are not practical, but ideological. Nonetheless, the idea that YHWH does not endorse all the prophets is a first step in the literary creation of prophetic conflicts in the book of Jeremiah, as we will see in the following.

3. The prophets and the Community

Jeremiah 23 (notwithstanding Jer 23:1–8, a short oracle about the “righteous branch” of the kings of Judah),¹²⁶ has often been seen as Jeremiah’s principal attack on the falsehood promulgated by his major antagonists, the “false” prophets.¹²⁷ In fact, Jer 23:9–40 comprises mostly oracles concerning the misconduct of the prophets. Scholars agree in considering Jer 23:9–40 a series of originally distinct sayings that were later brought together because they deal with the common topic of prophecy, as the superscription clearly highlights (Jer 23:9, לַנְּבִיאִים, “concerning the prophets”).¹²⁸ Nonetheless, many do not question the authorship of Jeremiah for most of the materials in the chapter and argue that the prophet may have spoken them in different times before incorporating them in the book.¹²⁹

It is a commonplace in scholarship to consider Jeremiah’s conflict against other prophets as part of his early career, and thus these oracles are dated between the end of the reign of Josiah and the second siege of Jerusalem.¹³⁰ However, the evidence of editorial work points to different aims and different times of composition for each piece. The dating to the years preceding the fall of Jerusalem is not supported by any element in the text and seems to be inferred from other passages about prophets (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 27–29), whose settings evidently point to the years preceding the Babylonian invasion and the fall of Jerusalem.¹³¹

¹²⁶ The short, composite oracle covering Jer 23:1–8 is generally considered to be a later coda which is connected to a previous section about the royal house of Judah, in Jer 21:11–23:8; see Thiel, *Redaktion 1-45*, 230; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 486; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 444; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 575; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 324.

¹²⁷ See Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 196; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 147; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 49; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 192; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 624; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 334; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 215.

¹²⁸ See Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 127; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 147; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 49; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 197; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 624; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 449; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 334; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 302; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 21B. New York: Doubleday, 2005), 179.

¹²⁹ This is the position of Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 196; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 493. Cunliffe-Jones questions the assumption that the “historical” Jeremiah would have collected the oracles himself but accept his authorship for all the sayings in Jer 23. The collector would have been his secretary, Baruch; see Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 159. Similarly, others accept that Jeremiah is responsible for at least part of the chapter. Bright, Overholt and Holladay consider Jeremianic the totality of Jer 23:9–32; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 154; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 69; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 648. Others tend to consider only Jer 23:9–24, taking vv.25–32, 33–40 as later developments; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 192; McKane, *Jeremiah* vo.1, 597, 602; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 302.

¹³⁰ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 155; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 494; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 625.

¹³¹ Carroll considers that part of Jer 23:9–40 reflects late, post-exilic polemics, such as the collusion between prophets and evildoers (Jer 23:16–17), the attack on oneiromancy (Jer 23:25–32, that Carroll connects to Zech 13:2–6) and the general reproach of the community (Jer 23:33–40); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 450ff.

Finally, scholars generally understand Jer 23:9–40 to be a long discussion about the theme of “false” prophecy. Thus, these verses are taken as an explanation of why the “historical” Jeremiah came into conflict with the other prophets; it is also believed that the chapter establishes criteria for the distinction between “true” and “false” prophets.¹³² It seems however that only later texts, such as the section Jer 27–29, may justify this understanding of the accusations aimed at the prophets. The analysis here proposed (considering only Jer 23:13–15; 16–22; 25–32) will prove that nothing in it presupposes a prophetic conflict (as in, prophet vs. prophet) nor a contrast between legitimate or illegitimate prophetic gifts. This chapter simply gathers accusations against the prophetic class, which present in some passages a new development of the motif of promising peace.

3.1 Extent of analysis

Before turning to the texts, an outline of the extent of the analysis of Jer 23 is necessary. Only three excerpts will be considered in detail, namely Jer 23:13–15; 16–22 and Jer 23:25–32, as only in these passages are the prophets accused either of falsehood (Jer 23:14, 25–26, 32) or of promising peace (Jer 23:17). The introductory unit Jer 23:9–12 will not be considered, as it does not single out the prophets for their specific faults but rebukes them along with the corrupt society of Judah (Jer 23:10).¹³³ Moreover, these allegations are not even exclusively directed to the prophetic class, but at the entire clergy (Jer 23:11). Similarly, also Jer 23:23–24 will be left aside. This unit is generally considered to be a later addition, which does not deal with either peace or falsehood, and does not revolve around prophecy. It rather presents three statements about YHWH’s immanent and transcendent nature.¹³⁴ Finally, the last oracle in Jer 23:33–40 will not be considered. These verses in fact present a later appendix about the

¹³² This is indeed the most common reading of Jer 23:9–40; see Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 196; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 154; Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 160; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 49; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 192; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 493; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 625; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 302; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 334ff; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 215; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 260.

¹³³ For Jer 23:9–12 as a self-standing poetic unit, see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 154; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 492; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 452; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 567; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 624; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 304; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 334.

¹³⁴ Many consider Jer 23:23–24 an independent unit, with no direct link with what precedes or follows, which is a sound understanding; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 464; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 586; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 639; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 348; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 266. Moreover, the connection of Jer 23:23–24 with the theme of prophecy is uncertain, although some state that the prophets are possibly concerned with the immanence and transcendence of YHWH; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 190; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 131; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 149; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 64; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 200 and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 268. The editorial placement of these verses in this precise context seems to imply that their interpretation should relate to prophecy, although this connection remains obscure.

people's disobedience that has caused YHWH to discard them, but do not accuse or single out the prophets.¹³⁵

3.2 Prophets of Samaria and Prophets of Jerusalem (Jer 23:13–15)

13 In the prophets of Samaria, I have seen foolishness. They have prophesied by Baal and they have led astray my people, Israel. 14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem, I have seen horror; they commit adultery and walk in falsehood. They strengthen the hands of the evildoers so that no one turns from their evil actions. They are to me like the whole Sodom, her inhabitants¹³⁶ as Gomorrah. 15 Therefore, thus speaks YHWH of hosts concerning the prophets, “Behold! I shall cause them to eat wormwood and I will cause them to drink poisoned water, because from the prophets of Jerusalem profaneness has gone out to the whole land”.

Given a different subject matter from Jer 23:9–12, it seems plausible to consider Jer 23:13–15 a separate saying.¹³⁷ After the end of the previous unit, which is closed by the formula, נאם יהוה, “oracle of YHWH” (Jer 23:12), new accusations appear but, in this occasion, they are focused only on the prophets of Samaria and Jerusalem. The placement of the unit may be due to the mention of the cultic pollution in the temple in the preceding unit (Jer 23:11). However, here the theme of impurity is not connected to generic evildoers (Jer 23:10), and its source is not found in the entire religious class (Jer 23:11), but it is confined to the prophets of Jerusalem. From among their sins, the accusation of falsehood (הלך בשקר, “walking in falsehood”) stands out and needs further addressing.

¹³⁵ This is a widespread understanding of Jer 23:33–40. It should also be considered that the unit has suffered in the transmission, presenting a troubled text; see Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 164; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 154; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 49; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 253; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 503; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 480; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 597; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 648.

¹³⁶ There is no antecedent for the feminine suffix in the unit. However, the presence of Jerusalem in the previous verse should be understood as the referent for the feminine suffix, meaning that the inhabitants of Jerusalem are on the same level as those of Gomorrah; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 495; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 338.

¹³⁷ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 154; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 494; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 192; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 545; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 573; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 624.

3.2.1 Adultery and Walking in Falsehood

It seems that the charges of falsehood against the prophets in Jer 23:14 show limited analogies with the motif of promising peace. As we have seen, the prophets' falsehood generally relates to their promising peace during the years of the Babylonian invasion (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15). However, in this pericope, no mention of war or military invasion, nor references to the fall of Jerusalem recur. Here, the word שקר is not juxtaposed to any forms of the verb נבא and it seems safe to assume that the prophets' falsehood does not pertain to something they may have proclaimed. Although some have considered the expression to be connected to the idea of “prophesying falsehood” as seen elsewhere (Jer 14:14),¹³⁸ it should be considered that Jer 23:14 does not even seem to have its target in “prophecy”. This verse rather points towards the social misconduct of the prophets of Jerusalem, who, besides walking in falsehood, commit adultery and collude with the evildoers in the community.

The semantic sphere covered by the term נאף, “adultery”, complicates the interpretation of the mention of falsehood in the context. Adultery may refer to general immorality, including in the sexual sphere, as the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah at the end of Jer 23:14 seems to imply.¹³⁹ In addition, some have considered that adultery could be related to the presence of foreign cults in the temple of Jerusalem,¹⁴⁰ which would also offer an interpretation for the prophets' falsehood. As seen elsewhere,¹⁴¹ it has been suspected that the word שקר is a cipher for the god Baal, so that the main accusation against the prophets of Jerusalem would be the apostasy of YHWH in favour of the Phoenician god.¹⁴² Be this as it may, the worshipping of Baal represents exclusively the foolishness of the prophets of Samaria (Jer 23:13), because the structure of Jer 23:13–15 conveys that Jerusalem is worse than Samaria, as the correlation between the two *waws* at the beginning of vv.13–14 implies.¹⁴³ Thus, the prophets of Jerusalem are not charged with the same sin of the prophets of Samaria. Given the mention of Sodom and Gomorrah at the end of Jer 23:14, an interpretation that points to the immoral conduct of the

¹³⁸ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 54; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 340; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 307; . Similarly, McKane admits that this might be a possibility, although he recognizes that other interpretations of the verse are possible; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 575.

¹³⁹ As regards this, a reference to immorality is considered by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152; Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 160; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 55; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 264. More prone to take the verse as a hint to immoral sexual conduct are Duhm, *Jeremia*, 184; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 575 and Jones, *Jeremiah*, 307.

¹⁴⁰ As considered by Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 340; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 216.

¹⁴¹ See Section 2.3.2 in the current chapter.

¹⁴² This solution is proposed by Rudolph and adopted by J. Thompson and Holladay; see Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 129; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 495 and Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 632.

¹⁴³ As recognized by Bright, *Jeremia*, 151; Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 160; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 632; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 456; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 340; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 265.

prophets of Jerusalem with regards to the community appears more likely, as is also implied in the accusation of colluding with other evildoers. In this context, the idea of “walking in falsehood” is probably a reference to some form of deceit and should not relate to the promises of false peace during the Babylonian invasion seen in Jer 5:31; 6:13; 14:13–14.¹⁴⁴

To conclude, this unit clearly presents accusations aimed at the prophets of Samaria (Jer 23:13) and Jerusalem (Jer 23:14–15), the former because of their apostasy, the latter for general misconduct against the community. No elements that point to the differentiation between “false” and “true” prophecy, nor references to prophetic conflicts are found in this text, which simply displays an anti-prophetic attitude. This oracle is anonymous and only if the prophet Jeremiah is presumed to be the speaker may an interpretation of these verses as a polemic uttered from a prophet against his own class be allowed. Apart from the word שקר, no other related terminology nor any similarities in context between this unit and the motif of promising peace appear.

3.3 There Will Be Peace to You (Jer 23:16–22)

16 Thus says YHWH of hosts, Do not listen to the words of the prophets,¹⁴⁵ they are filling you with vacuity; they speak of a vision from their heart, not from the mouth of YHWH. 17 They keep saying to those who despise the word of YHWH,¹⁴⁶ there will be peace to you; and to all¹⁴⁷ those who walk in the stubbornness of their heart, they say, no evil will come upon you. 18 Because, who has stood in the council

¹⁴⁴ As considered by Allen, *Jeremiah*, 265. Similarly, Carroll points out that given the lack of qualifications in the text, such a strongly connoted term as שקר is open to different interpretations; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 456.

¹⁴⁵ The MT of v.16a also presents הנבאים לכם, “who prophesy to you”, lacking in G, which therefore many consider a secondary addition; see Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 152; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 148; Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 250; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 496; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 533; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 458; McKane, *Jeremiah vol. 1*, 578 and Jones, *Jeremiah*, 308.

¹⁴⁶ MT reads אמרים אמור למנאצי דבר יהוה, “The keep saying to those who despise me, ‘YHWH has said’”. G presents the reading, λέγουσιν τοῖς ἀπαθουσμένοις τὸν λόγον κυρίου, “They say to those who reject the word of the Lord”, which led many commentators to re-point MT according to G; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 148; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 447; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 633; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 458; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 342; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 262. McKane instead deletes דבר יהוה as a secondary addition, which is meant to convey that peace comes from YHWH; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 577. However, there is no textual evidence for this the deletion, while emending the text according to G seems a sound solution.

¹⁴⁷ The MT וכל, “and all”, hardly makes sense and the emendation into ולכל, “and to all”, is necessary; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 459; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 577; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 633; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 342.

of YHWH that they may see¹⁴⁸ his word? Who has given ear to his word¹⁴⁹ and listened? 19 Behold the storm of YHWH! Fury shall go forth! A storm is whirling; upon the head of the wicked, it shall whirl. 20 The anger of YHWH will not return until it has accomplished and performed the purpose of his heart. In days to come you will understand this in full understanding. 21 I did not send the prophets, and they have run; I did not speak to them and they have prophesied. 22 If they had stood in my council, they would have caused my people to listen to my words and turned them away from their way of evil and from the evilness of their doings.

This unit has been attached to the accusations aimed at the prophets of Jerusalem (Jer 23:13–15) and clearly expands on the indictment of the prophetic class, this time addressing the people in Judah. Its borders are signalled by YHWH's judgement which closes the previous unit (Jer 23:15), and by the presence of a peculiar, separate saying in Jer 23:23–24, whose connections with the theme of prophecy are doubtful.¹⁵⁰ Nonetheless, this passage contains traits of expansion and literary growth.

It has been observed that the presence of v.18 troubles the structure of the oracle and thus many consider it to be an insertion by a later glossator,¹⁵¹ which seems a sound understanding. In fact, this verse reads as a wisdom saying inserted under the influence of Jer 23:22, which also presents a mention of the council of YHWH. Secondly, the mention of the storm in vv.19–20 appears abruptly in the oracle and seems to be unconnected with the theme of prophecy. Moreover, these verses appear elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 30:23–24), which undermines their authenticity in the chapter.¹⁵² Nevertheless, some commentators consider the

¹⁴⁸ The MT also presents the *qal* form וישמע, “and they heard”, which does not appear in G, and seems inconsistent with the jussive וירא, “that they may see”. There is little doubt that the text of v.18 is conflated, and that וישמע represents an addition; see Janzen, *Studies*, 12; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 581; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 633.

¹⁴⁹ Reading the *Qere* דברו instead of the *K^etib* דברי.

¹⁵⁰ That Jer 23:16–22 represents a literary unit is proposed by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 155; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 56; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 196; J. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 496; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 459; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 577; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 633; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 341. Allen instead works with a shorter text, namely Jer 23:16–20; see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 266.

¹⁵¹ This is the reconstruction offered by Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 235 and followed by Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 251; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 582; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 459.

¹⁵² Thus, Duhm argues that Jer 23:19–20 is a secondary addition based on Jer 30:23–24 and is followed by Cunliffe-Jones; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 187 and Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 161. On the contrary, Bright, Nicholson, J. Thompson and McKane all consider the storm to be genuinely part of Jer 23 as a punishment of the prophets; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 197; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 498; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 581. Thiel (followed by Carroll) argues that Jer 23:19–20 and 30:23–24 are stereotypical and secondary in both chapters, which seems to be a more likely understanding; see Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 578; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 459 and 585.

depiction of the storm to be the exact words spoken by YHWH at his council (v.18), and hence read Jer 23:16–22 as a cohesive unit that presents the credentials of a genuine prophet.¹⁵³

The interpretation of Jer 23:18 as containing criteria to distinguish Jeremiah from the other prophets presents a *non sequitur* with Jer 23:22. Some assume that in Jer 23:16–22 Jeremiah claims to be a “true” prophet because he attended the inner circle of YHWH; his opponents are “false” because they did not participate in the council.¹⁵⁴ However, it does not seem that the unit Jer 23:16–22 refers to the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets, and the attendance at the סוד יהוה, “council of YHWH”, as the sign of a “true” prophet creates problems of consistency in this text. According to Jer 23:22, if the prophets had been part of the council, they would have been able to make the people listen to the message of YHWH and turn away from their evil. If the reader is to assume that Jer 23:18 claims that Jeremiah indeed took part in the council, then how come he never made the people turn away from evil, given that his words are so often ignored by his fellow citizens? Not even Jeremiah himself would embody “true” prophecy according to this criterion.¹⁵⁵

It seems safer to consider Jer 23:18 as a later insertion which is meant to reiterate that no one, not even the prophets, could access the inner thought of YHWH (e.g. the similar passage in Job 15:8). Any interpretations that take this verse as establishing criteria to differentiate between the prophets is secondary, and is influenced by the depiction of Jeremiah as the only “true” prophet, which is a trait that pertains to the late work of the redactors (Jer 27–29).¹⁵⁶ It seems that both v.18 and the storm sent by YHWH in vv.19–20 should be considered as secondary developments, leaving Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 as the original nucleus of the unit. These verses present many similarities with the motif of promising peace, and display yet a further development.

3.3.1 Promising Peace to the Wicked

An impressive amount of lexical similarities connects the layer Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 to the excerpts previously analysed. The idea of comforting the people by promising שלום in Jer 23:17

¹⁵³ This is the interpretation offered by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 155, and followed by Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 197 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 344.

¹⁵⁴ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 197; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 499; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 635; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 309; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 344.

¹⁵⁵ This is a point raised by Carroll, to dismiss the understanding that Jer 23:18, 22 may be taken as criteria to distinguish between “true” and “false” prophets; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 463.

¹⁵⁶ This is a reading proposed by Carroll, which seems to the point; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 450, 463.

echoes Jer 6:14 and 14:13 (especially the expression *שלום יהיה לכם*, “there will be peace to you”). Likewise, the visions from the minds of the prophets in Jer 23:16 (*חזון לבם*) recalls the analogous expression in Jer 14:14. Finally, YHWH’s disavowal (Jer 23:21) presents the same form as Jer 14:14–15. Such remarkable similarities suggest literary dependency between these passages, although it must also be noticed that the materials against the prophets in Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 present some distinctive changes.

The term *שקר*, which is semantically connected to the message of peace elsewhere, does not recur in Jer 23:16–17, 21–22. Similarly, no references to war or invasion appear in this excerpt. The omission of such key features sets Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 apart from the rest of the materials considered in this study. In Jer 23:17, the term “peace” does not seem to be connected to the sense of security expressed and disseminated by the prophets prior the events of 587 (as was the case in Jer 6:14; 14:13). In fact, the pivotal point of the excerpt relates to the duty of the prophets; they should have helped the people turn away from their evil, but they failed (Jer 23:22). Instead of standing up to the wicked, the prophets colluded with the evildoers and promised peace to them (Jer 23:17).¹⁵⁷

Within this context, the word *שלום* is meant to accuse the prophets of bad conduct towards the community, to the point that they should not be listened to at all (Jer 23:16).¹⁵⁸ In the land, as the reader is told on several occasions (Jer 23:10, 14, 17), some evildoers are conniving with the prophets and this represents the context against which the recurrence of peace should be read. The entire chapter presents a polarization between good and sinful people (the prophets being assimilated to the latter). Thus, a dichotomy between good and bad people, rather than “true” and “false” prophets represents the focus of Jer 23:16–17. This dichotomy is exemplified by the warning not to listen to the prophets, which is clearly addressed to the virtuous people (Jer 23:16). Conversely, the presence of sinful members of the community is inferred from the reference to those who despise YHWH, and with whom the prophets have evidently been associated (Jer 23:17).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ This is a common interpretation; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 155; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 197; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 497; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 460; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 636; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 345; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 309.

¹⁵⁸ Some have pointed out that these would be cultic or establishment prophets (Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 344-45; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 309), but, as Carroll rightly states, a specific group of prophets might be intended, although the text is too generic to draw conclusions; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 460.

¹⁵⁹ As regards this, Carroll rightly considers that the dichotomy between good and wicked people in Jer 23:16–17 is hardly part of a prophetic conflict prior the fall of Jerusalem, because this event, as a literary motif, revolves around accusations aimed at homogenous groups (the kings and their court, the people, the religious class, the prophetic class) and never presents inner divisions within said groups; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 461.

In conclusion, from a syntactical point of view, most of the unit Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 derives from the motif of promising peace (especially from Jer 14:13–16). Nonetheless, the theme is inserted in a different context, which does not revolve around the accusation against the prophetic class of promising peace in times of war to the entire nation, but rather charges the prophets with having promised to the wicked in the community that repentance was not necessary, and that YHWH would not have punished their behaviour. The versatility of the motif of promising peace (and prophesying falsehood) is also highlighted in the following text.

3.4 Dreams of Falsehood (Jer 23:25–32)

25 I have heard what the prophets who prophesy falsehood in my name have said, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed!” 26 How long shall this be in the mind of the prophets who prophesy lies? Prophets of the deceit of their heart,¹⁶⁰ 27 who think to cause my people to forget my name with their dreams that they tell one another, as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? 28 Let the prophet that has a dream tell a dream, but he who has received my word shall speak my word of truth. What has the straw to do with the wheat? Oracle of YHWH. 29 Is not my word like fire,¹⁶¹ oracle of YHWH, like a hammer that breaks the rock? 30 Behold! Here I am against the prophets, oracle of YHWH, who steal my word from one another. 31 Here I am against the prophets, oracle of YHWH, who use their tongues and say, “thus says YHWH”. 32 Here I am against those who prophesy dreams of falsehood, oracle of YHWH, and tell them, and cause my people to wander because of their falsehoods and their wantonness. I did not send them, and I did not command them, and they do no good for this people, oracle of YHWH.

This unit presents many analogies with the motif of promising peace. It has been considered by someone to relate to the previous oracle (Jer 23:23–24),¹⁶² but the specific focus on the

¹⁶⁰ The text of Jer 23:26 is difficult, because the whole sentence lacks a subject. To avoid this problem, Duhm proposes to read *הישוב לב*, “when will the heart [of the prophets] turn?” instead of MT *היש בלב*; see Duhm, *Jeremiah*, 191. Similarly, Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 641 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 347. Others instead, although acknowledging the difficulties in the verse, state that its meaning is clear, and leave MT unchanged; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 589; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 207. A literal translation of the verse is here presented, adding the indefinite subject (“this”) that harks back to the convincing of the prophets in Jer 23:25.

¹⁶¹ The MT reads *הלא כה דברי באש*, “Is not my word thus – like fire?”, which sounds redundant, although some commentators leave MT unchanged; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 63; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 347; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 208. Holladay suggests reading the word *בוע*, “burning”, instead of the adverb *כה*, “thus”, rendering “is not my word burning like fire?”; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 641. The safer solution seems to simply delete *כה*; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 469; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 588.

¹⁶² As regards this, see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 155; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 64. Similarly, Nicholson, who deems Jer 23:23–32 to be a Deuteronomistic expansion; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 199; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 501; and Jones, *Jeremiah*, 311.

prophets clearly sets Jer 23:25–32 apart from what follows and what precedes, just as the blaming of the prophetic class is absent in both Jer 23:23–24 and 23:33–40.¹⁶³

Nonetheless, Jer 23:25–32 does not represent a cohesive self-standing unit but show traces of literary growth from a poetic core found in Jer 23:28–29, which was later expanded with prose materials in Jer 23:25–27, 30–32.¹⁶⁴ The poetic core presents a short saying about the superiority of YHWH's word compared to dreams as a source of divination (vv.28–29).¹⁶⁵ The prose expansions, on the other hand, present an impressive amount of analogies with the motifs of promising peace and prophesying falsehood. In fact, the prophets are said to prophesy falsehood in the name of YHWH (Jer 23:25; Jer 14:14–15), but that is only the delusion of their own minds (Jer 23:26; Jer 14:14; 23:16). Likewise, in the final part of the oracle, YHWH expresses his disdain towards the prophets with the expression *לֹא שְׁלַחְתִּים וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים*, “I have not sent them, nor have I commanded to them” (Jer 23:21, 32; Jer 14:14–15). It seems that from a core about the comparison between the word of YHWH and dreams, a new oracle has been shaped, mostly reusing stereotypical materials from the motif of promising peace and other elements found in Jer 23 (e.g. the mention of Baal in Jer 23:13 and 23:27).

3.4.1 Oneiromancy or Prophecy?

In the Bible, YHWH often communicates his will in dreams (1 Sam 28:6–15; 1 Kgs 3:5–15), and the practice is generally seen as a positive one (Gen 20:3–6; 28:12–15; 31:24; 37:9, 41; Num 12:6–8). Although the interpretation of Jer 23:25–32 as expressing the concerns of the “historical” Jeremiah regarding other means of divination and his opposition to prophets who resort to such techniques is often proposed,¹⁶⁶ most of the elements here comprised are stereotypical, and clearly a product of redactional intervention.

In the first part of the prose expansions (Jer 23:25–27), the prophets lie to the people and tell them their dreams. An obvious problem of consistency is found in Jer 23:27. The fact that

¹⁶³ As considered by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 464, 470; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 584; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 639 and Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 348.

¹⁶⁴ Most commentators agree on setting Jer 23:28–29 apart from the rest; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 149; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 501; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 642; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 472; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 349. On the other hand, only McKane and Allen take vv.25–32 as a cohesive prose unit; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 588 and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 271.

¹⁶⁵ This is the general understanding of these verses; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 153; Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 162; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 502; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 644; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 349.

¹⁶⁶ See Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 200; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 502; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 645; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 348; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 271.

the prophets could abuse the name of YHWH and yet make the people forget YHWH (for Baal) reads convolutedly and inconsistently. Some commentators have tried to explain the reference to the name of YHWH as being a reference to the essential nature of the deity,¹⁶⁷ but it seems more plausible to accept this *non sequitur* as part of the re-use of stereotypical materials found elsewhere in the chapter (see the mention of Baal in Jer 23:13).¹⁶⁸

The second addition (Jer 23:30–32) presents problems of interpretation. The stealing of prophetic words reads cryptic (v.30); one common interpretation points to self-styled prophets who are not divinely commissioned to speak and resort to stealing messages from others, ostensibly “true” prophets.¹⁶⁹ Others commentators have however argued that there is here an opposition between real prophets and others who only pretend to be prophets.¹⁷⁰ Both understandings appear possible, but what is clear is that the fallacy of oneiromancy is never addressed in this text. The focus seems to be the importance of the word of YHWH, and there are no clear elements that address a prophetic conflict relating to this topic.¹⁷¹ It is true that an attack on a specific prophetic group cannot be excluded, but it is not presented in the form of a dichotomy between “false” and “true” prophets. This text does not take an issue with the definition of prophetic gifts but presents a reprimand of those who claim to be speaking the words of YHWH, while they are actually only repeating vain dreams.¹⁷²

3.5 The Prophets and the Community – Observations

Of the discrete units that compose Jer 23:9–40, only two passages (Jer 23:16–17, 21–22; 25–32) present evidence of literary dependency with the motif of promising peace seen elsewhere in Jeremiah. Nonetheless, the context does not refer to the fall of Jerusalem, but rather addresses the faults of the prophets with regard to the community. In the first excerpt (Jer 23:16–17, 21–22), the prophets are depicted as conniving with the evildoers in the community, to whom they promise that no punishment for their conduct will come. In the second one (Jer 23:25–27, 30–32), the prophets are accused of abusing the authority of YHWH,

¹⁶⁷ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 153; followed by J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 501.

¹⁶⁸ As Carroll notes, *Jeremiah*, 471.

¹⁶⁹ See Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 201; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 502; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 645. Craigie, besides the possibility of the “false” prophets stealing words from the “true” ones, also considers that “false” prophets may be stealing oracles from one another; see Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 350.

¹⁷⁰ See McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 593.

¹⁷¹ This is an insight provided by Carroll, who deems the opposition between words of YHWH and dreams to be a false dichotomy, because a positive tradition about dreams does exist in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, Jer 23:25–32 revolves around the prophets’ access to the word of YHWH; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 472.

¹⁷² See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 473–74.

by prophesying falsehood in his name. Finally, no criteria to set apart “true” and “false” prophets appear in this chapter, and similarly, the presence of prophetic conflicts, as in Jeremiah vs. other prophets, cannot be sustained. In this chapter, Jeremiah is never mentioned, and all the oracles are anonymous. The prophetic class is attacked, but a comparison with the prophet of the book as embodying an alternative model of prophecy is never attempted.

4. The Prophets and the King of Babylon

The passages considered in this section cover materials found in Jer 27–29 and the short excerpt in Jer 37:17–21. In these texts, the accusations against the prophets assume precise outlines and are expressed in vivid and detailed accounts. For the first time, the faults of the prophets are clearly inserted within the framework of the Babylonian invasion, which was only an implicit element in the previous excerpts (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 14:13–16). Similarly, the enemies of Jeremiah are not only anonymous groups of prophets but are sometimes identified by their names (e.g. Hananiah the prophet, in Jer 28; Ahab son of Kolaiah, Zedekiah son of Maaseiah and Shemaiah the Nehelamite, in Jer 29). Moreover, although the faults of the prophets are the same, this section abounds in new details and developments (e.g. the role of Nebuchadnezzar, the mention of a short exile, the interest in the temple vessels).

4.1 The Cycle Jeremiah 27–29

As regards the placement of these chapters in the book of Jeremiah, there is agreement in considering Jer 27–29 to be a uniform literary collection,¹⁷³ which revolves around the political tensions between Judah and Babylon, Jeremiah’s dispute with other prophets as to a possible military invasion and the duration of the Babylonian captivity. In these three chapters, Jeremiah appears to be preaching submission to Babylon as part of YHWH’s plan, while other prophets,

¹⁷³ See Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 180; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 24; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 528; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 529; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 114; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 346; Pamela J. Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52* (WBC 27; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 35; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 308. Others instead favour a shorter section, comprising only Jer 27–28; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 201; Nicholson, *The book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26-52* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 28 and Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 13. Only Allen works with a longer section, namely Jer 26–29, although he suggests that ch. 26 was added later as the preface to the collection; see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 295.

in and outside the land, support a policy of resistance against the Babylonian overlords. Besides the presence of this common motif, Jer 27–29 presents formal and structural similarities, to such a degree that some scholars have considered that these chapters may once have composed an independent collection before becoming part of the book of Jeremiah.¹⁷⁴ In fact, some textual characteristics set Jer 27–29 apart from the rest of the book of Jeremiah. These chapters all present a distinctive spelling of names, which does not recur in the rest of the book of Jeremiah.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, Jeremiah is constantly addressed as “prophet” (Jer 28:1, 5–6, 10–12, 15; 29:1),¹⁷⁶ which is not a common feature in the previous chapters.¹⁷⁷

Similarly, scholars have also highlighted remarkable similarities between Jer 27–29 and the book of Daniel,¹⁷⁸ which may account for the discrete origin and circulation of these chapters. Among these similarities, besides the same spelling of the name of the Babylonian king (Dan 1:18; 2:1), Jer 27–29 and Daniel focus on the fate of the temple vessels that were plundered by the Babylonians (Jer 27:16–22; 28:2–4 and Dan 5:1–4), they make explicit references to executions by fire (Jer 29:22 and Dan 3:20–22)¹⁷⁹ and they attest the practice of praying among the exiles (Jer 29:7, 10–14 and Dan 6:10; 9:3). Finally, Jer 29:10–14 also presents the famous “70 years of exile” prophecy, which has later been reprised and reinterpreted in Dan 9:1–2. As we can see, Jer 27–29 show peculiar features that do not appear elsewhere in Jeremiah, and within its given form they are clearly marked off as an independent cycle. However, it is difficult to establish whether these chapters, at some point, circulated independently; if anything, their homogeneity in form and content may simply point to a uniform redaction at the time of their being inserted in the book of Jeremiah.

¹⁷⁴ Such a possibility is considered plausible by Carroll, Jones and Scalise; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 523; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 346; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 34.

¹⁷⁵ The name of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, throughout Jer 27–29 is recorded as נְבוּכַדְנֶאצַּר. In the rest of the book, the spelling with a *resh* (נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר), which is a closer transposition of the Akkadian *Nabû-kudurri-uṣur*, represents the norm (Jer 25:1; 32:1; 34:1; 52:29–30). Likewise, instead of the usual suffix יהו- (e.g. in the name of the prophet of the book, ירמיהו), theophoric names generally present the suffix יה- (Jer 27:1; 28:5; 29:1).

¹⁷⁶ With the only exceptions of Jer 27:1; 29:30.

¹⁷⁷ In the MT of the book of Jeremiah, the expression “Jeremiah the prophet” becomes rather common in the second half of the book (e.g. Jer 28:5–6, 10–12, 15; 29:1, 29; 32:2; 34:6; 36:8, 26; 37:2–3, 6, 13; 38:9–10, 14; 42:2, 4; 43:6; 46:13; 47:; 49:34; 50:1; 51:59), while it represents a rare exception in the first one (only in Jer 20:2, to which it should be added a reference to Jeremiah as “prophet to the nations” in the late prologue, Jer 1:4). It appears that only in later times Jeremiah came to be considered essentially as a prophetic figure. As regards this, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 61.

¹⁷⁸ See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 114; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 535; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 37ff.

¹⁷⁹ As to this feature, Carroll argues that Nebuchadnezzar’s predilection for roasting his adversaries reported in the Aramaic half of the book of Daniel represents the source for the burning of Ahab and Zedekiah in Jer 29:21–23; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 560.

As regards the dating of these materials, the redactional framework presented by the chapters (Jer 27:1, 12; Jer 28:1; 29:1–3) locates these episodes in between 597 and 587, just after the first plundering of Jerusalem and the subsequent deportation of King Jeconiah.¹⁸⁰ Although some commentators accept the dating to the fourth year of Zedekiah (Jer 28:1), thus the year 594,¹⁸¹ there are features within Jer 27–29 that contradict this assumption and suggest a later date of composition. If we take the content of Jer 27 at face value, we must consider that the vassal king Zedekiah, freshly installed on the throne of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar II, had little or no reason to side with other kingdoms and plot a rebellion against his only guarantee of power (Jer 27:3–8). Moreover, a successful rebellion against Babylon may have even meant the return of King Jeconiah as the legitimate ruler, an outcome that the historical Zedekiah would hardly have desired.¹⁸² From the textual point of view, the first verses of Jer 27 and 28 are confused and cannot be considered historically accurate to date the events.¹⁸³

Likewise, the interest that Jer 27–28 display for the temple furnishings is definitely a concern of the historical Jewish communities who had returned from Babylon,¹⁸⁴ and who were deeply involved with the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 5:14–16; 6:5). Attention should also be focused on the peculiar treatment of the character “Jeremiah” within this section. As said above, Jeremiah is here repeatedly addressed as “prophet”, and his role is in line with the late prologue of the book (Jer 1). In chs. 27–29, Jeremiah appears as prophet for all the nations (Jer 1:10) and as the major authority for the communities in the land and in the exile; this portrait could emerge only from the integrated reading of the whole book, as it represents a later feature

¹⁸⁰ The name of the king exiled in 597 appears in several variants in the book of Jeremiah. In Jer 52:31, the name of this king is Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:8–12), but the book alternates this name with Coniah (Jer 22:24) and Jeconiah (Jer 27:20; 28:4; 29:2). The variant “Jeconiah” is the one that appears in Jer 27–29 and is therefore preferred in this study.

¹⁸¹ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 201; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 528; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 120; Clements, *Jeremiah*, 160; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 356; Scalise et alii, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 48; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 306. Others consider every year between 597 and 587 as providing a suitable context; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 29; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 685. Nicholson, although he considers the whole section to be the product of Deuteronomistic authors, still deems the content of these chapters to be historically reliable; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 28.

¹⁸² These are McKane’s and Carroll’s punctual objections to the historical accuracy of the cycle; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 716 and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 530.

¹⁸³ The texts of Jer 27:1 and 28:1 will be addressed in the following, but first, it should be observed that they both present problems. Jer 27:1 signals that the events take place under King Jehoiakim, while evidently addressing King Zedekiah throughout. Similarly, Jer 28:1 presents two conflicting dates for the encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah. Far from being historically accurate, these two verses clearly mark the redactors’ attempt to place the events of Jer 27 close to those of Jer 28, all before the fall of Jerusalem in 587, which has already been implied by the text.

¹⁸⁴ As pointed out by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 534, and Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 243, 247.

in its redaction.¹⁸⁵ Below, each chapter will be addressed individually, to highlight similarities and differences as regards the blaming of the prophets in the cycle 27–29. It should also be added that the Masoretic text and the *Septuagint* differ significantly in length and placement as regards the cycle Jer 27–29; in fact, in the Greek version, Jer 27–29 occupy chs. 34–36. Besides, the Hebrew provides a considerably longer text for these chapters, with mostly minor variations (e.g. single words or short sentences were added to the Masoretic text for clarification, along with titles and epithets). In the critical notes to each translation, differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek version will be highlighted only when relevant.

4.1.1 Do not Serve the King of Babylon (Jer 27:1–21)

1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from YHWH, saying,¹⁸⁶ 2 Thus says YHWH to me, “Make bonds and yokes for yourself and put them on your neck. 3 Send them to the king of Edom and to the king of Moab and to the king of the sons of Ammon and to the king of Tyre and to the king of Sidon by the messengers that are coming in Jerusalem to Zedekiah, king of Judah. 4 Command them for their masters saying, thus says YHWH of hosts, god of Israel, thus you shall say to your masters, 5 I have made the earth, the humans and the animals that are on the earth by my great power and by my outstretched arm; and I am giving it to whom is proper to me. 6 Now, I will give all these lands in the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, my servant,¹⁸⁷ and even

¹⁸⁵ As regards this, Carroll remarks that the depiction of the prophet of the book in Jer 27–29 matches the very positive consideration of prophets given by later books like Chronicles (e.g. 2 Chr 36:12), an attitude which is almost entirely absent in the oldest materials in the book of Jeremiah; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 523. The positive tradition about the “prophet Jeremiah” has been incorporated in Dan 9:2, which reprises the famous prophecy of Jer 29:10–14.

¹⁸⁶ The mention of Jehoiakim is clearly misplaced here, as the chapter is about Zedekiah (Jer 27:3, 12); some Hebrew manuscripts correct the MT and place the event under the rule of King Zedekiah. Besides, the superscription is not in G and is probably a secondary addition; it seems that a copyist mistakenly copied the text of Jer 26:1 here; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 195; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 30; Thiel, *Redaktion 26-45*, 6; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 528; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 685; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 527; Scalise et alii, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 41; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 308.

¹⁸⁷ G for the Hebrew עבדִי, “my servant”, reads instead δουλεύειν αὐτῷ, “to serve him”. Lemke observes that the Greek text of Jeremiah, to convey submission to the king of Babylon, always uses the formula ἐργάζεσθαι αὐτῷ, “to work for him” (as in v.6b in G) and thus considers that the sentence δουλεύειν αὐτῷ in v.6a is a later addition to the Greek text; see Werner E. Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, my servant”, CQB 28 (1966), 48–50. According to Lemke’s reconstruction, the Hebrew עבדִי is also a later addition to the text, which was inserted in a period in which the Babylonian ruler was judged more favourably; see Lemke, “Nebuchadnezzar, my servant”, 48. In a similar way, Aejmelaes states that this more favourable consideration of Nebuchadnezzar belongs to the Hellenistic period; see Anneli Aejmelaes, “‘Nebuchadnezzar, My Servant’: Redaction History and Textual Development in Jer 27,” in García Martínez & Marc Vervenne (eds.), *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust* (BETL 192; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 1–18. On the other hand, Smelik takes the title “my servant” for Nebuchadnezzar to be genuine and dates the passage to the 6th century. He posits that YHWH firstly sent the prophets as his servants to redeem the people, but they ignored them; thus, he decided to send another type of servant, the tyrant Nebuchadnezzar, who was called out to bring about punishment

the animals of the wilderness I will give him to serve him. 7 All the nations will serve him, and his son and the son of his son, until the time of his land comes; then mighty people and great kings will conquer even him.¹⁸⁸ 8 If it happens that a nation, a reign, will not serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation, oracle of YHWH, with sword, famine and plague until I have destroyed them by his hand. 9 And you do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers,¹⁸⁹ your enchanters and your sorcerers, who speak to you saying, do not serve the king of Babylon! 10 Because falsehood they prophesy to you, to alienate you from your land. I will drive you away and you will perish.¹⁹⁰ 11 The nations that will bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and will serve him, I will let them live on their land, oracle of YHWH, and they will work on it and dwell in it”.

12 Then I said to Zedekiah king of Judah all these words, saying, bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people, so you will live. 13 Why would you and your people die by sword, famine and plague, just as YHWH proclaimed for the nation that does not serve the king of Babylon? 14 And do not listen to the words of the prophets that speak to you, saying, “Do not serve the king of Babylon”, because falsehood they prophesy to you. 15 Because I did not send them, oracle of YHWH, and they prophesy falsehood in my name, so that I drive you out and you will perish, you and the prophets that prophesy to you.

16 I spoke to the priests and to this entire people, saying, thus says YHWH, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets that prophesy to you saying, ‘behold, the temple equipment will now shortly be brought back from Babylon’. They are prophesying a lie to you. 17 Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon and live. Why shall this city be a desolation?¹⁹¹ 18 If they are prophets and they have the word of YHWH, let them intercede with YHWH of hosts that the vessels left in the house of YHWH and in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem do not go to Babylon”. 19 Thus says YHWH of hosts, regarding the pillars, the sea, the stands and the rest of the vessels that remain in this city, 20 which Nebuchadnezzar, king of

instead of correction; see Klaas A. D. Smelik, “My Servant Nebuchadnezzar: The Use of the Epithet ‘My Servant’ for the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Jeremiah”, VT 64 (2014), 134. Be that as it may, most commentators however accept that the Hebrew עבדי is more than likely a secondary addition to MT; see Janzen, *Studies*, 55; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 527; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 688; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 112; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 41.

¹⁸⁸ This entire verse does not appear in G.

¹⁸⁹ The MT reads an odd חלמתיכם, “your dreams”. The reading of G, τῶν ἐνυπνιαζομένων, “[to] your dreamers” (see V, *somniatores*), should be preferred, as it is more consistent with the list of professional diviners presented in the verse. This emendation is supported by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 196; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 527; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 691; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 528; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 113; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 42.

¹⁹⁰ The sentence והדחתי אתכם ואבדתם, “I will drive you away and you will perish”, in v.10b, is not in G, and may represent an addition based on Jer 27:15; see Janzen, *Studies*, 45; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 528; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 691; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 113; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 42.

¹⁹¹ This entire verse does not appear in G and is probably a later addition; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 197; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 529; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 693; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 42. Holladay considers it genuine as part of a chiasm that got lost in the transmission of the G (see vv.12–14, 16–17); see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 116. Similarly, Lundbom argues that G is defective of v.17 because of haplography, and thus takes it to be authentic in MT; see Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 322. However, the evidence of G appears strong enough to dismiss both suggestions.

Babylon, did not take when he carried in exile Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim the king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, along with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem. 21 Thus says YHWH of Hosts, god of Israel, concerning the equipment remaining in the house of YHWH and the house of the king of Judah and Jerusalem, “They shall be brought to Babylon and there they shall be until the day I deal with them, oracle of YHWH, then I shall bring them up and return to this place.”¹⁹²

This chapter is traditionally divided into three literary units (Jer 23:1–11; 12–15; 16–22),¹⁹³ taken as three discourses of Jeremiah which were meant to counter the court prophets’ predictions regarding the imminent Babylonian invasion. The outline of Jer 27 reads straightforwardly; Jeremiah here is simply reiterating the same message to three different audiences. In Jer 27:2–11, Jeremiah is speaking to the ambassadors of foreign kingdoms, warning them to bow before the king of Babylon, who is YHWH’s servant, and not to listen to their prophets. The exact same message is then addressed to King Zedekiah in the second unit (vv.12–15). Finally, in the third part (Jer 27:16–22), yet another warning not to trust the prophets is delivered to the priests and the people, but in this case the message of the prophets is not rebellion against Babylon, but the promise that the temple vessels will be returned to the temple.

4.1.1.1 Redaction History

The core of Jer 27 is found within the self-contained symbolic action of Jeremiah (the wearing and sending of yoke-bars, vv.2–3) and its explanation (submission to the ruling of Babylon, vv.4–8). Thus, vv.2–3 would represent the original nucleus, which was later supplemented with the theological explanation of the symbolic action, to clarify the necessity of the Babylonian dominance, in vv.5–8.¹⁹⁴ This is a possibility, although it is difficult to

¹⁹² The final verse in G is shorter and does not convey any sense of restoration for Judah, as it does in MT. G reads, εἰς βαβυλῶνα εἰσελεύσεται, λέγει κύριος, “[The vessels that are left in Jerusalem] shall enter into Babylon, says the Lord”, introducing the idea that also the vessels left in Jerusalem will eventually be taken into Babylon. That the MT contains a reworked oracle of salvation is held by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 197; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 704; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 536–37; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 114; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 353. Conversely, Thiel prefers MT, arguing that G presents an abridgement of the Hebrew tradition; see Thiel, *Redaktion 26–45*, 9.

¹⁹³ As regards this division, see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 34; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 202; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 29; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 531; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 695; Jones, *Jeremiah*, p349ff; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 243; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 305.

¹⁹⁴ Thiel considers in Jer 27:5–8 a Deuteronomistic explanation to the symbolic action of wearing the yoke; see Thiel, *Redaktion 26–52*, 7. McKane considers this pericope to be a theological expansion of the symbolic action; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 700. Jones instead takes Jer 27:2–11 as the basic unit of the oracle; see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 347.

delimit distinctly the original nucleus from the later developments in Jer 27:2–11. However, it seems safe to consider at the core of its growth the peculiar motif of “Jeremiah wears a yoke”, because such a tradition evidently circulated at some point (Jer 28).¹⁹⁵

Thus, the accusations aimed at the prophets in Jer 27:9–10 represent a later insertion, as they disrupt the description of the fate of those nations who would resist Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest (Jer 27:8) and those who would welcome it (Jer 27:11).¹⁹⁶ Hence, the conflict between Jeremiah and the prophets was not one of the concerns of the author of the original oracle, but was added later by a redactional hand.¹⁹⁷ That given, it is now easy to see how the second unit (vv.12–15) represents yet another literary layer that was added to the chapter. The message conveyed by vv.12–15 is the same as vv.2–11, but now Jeremiah is speaking directly to King Zedekiah. This addition should be connected to the fact that Jeremiah addressed the ambassadors who were summoned to the court of Zedekiah (v.4), without any involvement of the king, an element that may have prompted the addition of vv.12–15.¹⁹⁸

The unit Jer 27:16–22 represents the latest addition to the chapter,¹⁹⁹ most probably triggered by Jer 28:2–3, in which the prophet Hananiah promises that the temple vessels would

¹⁹⁵ As regards this, it should be observed that the complicated textual relation between Jer 27 and 28 has been considered differently. Already Duhm argued for literary dependency between the two, ascribing priority to Jer 28, which would represent the model for the content of Jer 27. Conversely, Mowinckel states that Jer 28 is a later and parallel account of the oracle about the temple vessels in Jer 27:16–22; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 217 and Mowinckel, *Komposition*, 9. Then, it has been suggested that Jer 27–28 developed from a communal core presenting Jeremiah wearing the yoke (Jer 27:2b, 12b; 28:10); see Gunther Wanke, *Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchsschrift* (BZAW 122; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), 34. To this core, Hossfeld and Meyer add Jer 28:11; see Frank Lothar Hossfeld & Ivo Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet: Analyse der alttestamentlichen Texte zum Thema: wahre und falsche Propheten* (BBB 9; Fribourg: Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973), 94. However, it seems more plausible to assume that the two chapters developed separately. This is the opinion of Nicholson, who considers the two to be products of the Deuteronomistic redactors about “false” prophecy; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 28. Carroll instead simply states that the two chapters developed from the same motif, namely Jeremiah wears a yoke to signal submission to Babylon; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 541. This solution appears the more likely, and the two core oracles have later been brought together and edited to include the blaming of the prophets, which represents the element that keeps the section Jer 27–29 together. Thus, although it is evident that Jer 27 and 28 are connected by literary dependency, we should avoid ascribing priority to one chapter over the other. In fact, each chapter had exclusive features that influenced the other (the temple vessels are a topic in the core oracle of Jer 28 brought into Jer 27:16–22; the necessity of the Babylonian invasion as part of YHWH’s plan appears originally in Jer 27 and is reprised in Jer 28:12–14).

¹⁹⁶ As regards this, Scalise also notices that the shift from the impersonal third person sing. (in vv.8, 11) to the second person pl. (in vv. 9–10) is striking; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah*, 51. This element reinforces the suspicion that the charges of falsehood against the prophets are secondary in the chapter.

¹⁹⁷ See Thiel, *Redaktion 26–45*, 7; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 533; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 708.

¹⁹⁸ As sustained by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 534; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 351. On the contrary, McKane appears more prone to accept that v.12b is sufficiently close to the core oracle (Jer 27:2–3) to be its natural continuation, later reworked into an address to Zedekiah; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 703.

¹⁹⁹ See Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 27; Thiel, *Redaktion 26–45*, 9; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 703; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 537 and Jones, *Jeremiah*, 347.

be brought back from Babylon within two years. The differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek version help to highlight the redaction history of the unit. The Greek does not present v.17; this is clearly a later insertion which displays a shorter (and earlier) version of v.22,²⁰⁰ and which highlights the different treatment of the motif of the temple furnishings and their return to Jerusalem. Conversely, the Greek version of v.22 presents an oracle of doom, which states that the temple equipment in Babylon will remain there, and eventually the Babylonians will plunder even what is left in Jerusalem. The Masoretic text instead has been reworked into an oracle of salvation; there will be a time in which YHWH will re-establish the vessels in the temple, as a sign of the restoration of his people in Jerusalem.

4.1.1.2 New prophets and New Messages

Some commentators take Jer 27:9–10, 14–15 to be another instance of the problem of “false” prophecy and “false” prophets in Jeremiah, this time enriched with biographical detail from the life of the prophet of the book.²⁰¹ From a textual point of view, it is evident that Jer 27 reuses the materials against the prophets that we have encountered in Jeremiah. The fact that these prophets are spreading falsehood (שקר, in Jer 27:10, 15) and the disavowal of YHWH (which is presented with the expression לא שלחתיים, “I did not send them” in Jer 27:15) are all known elements. However, two elements read completely new, namely, the warnings towards foreign nations not to trust their own diviners (Jer 27:3, 9), and the message spoken by the opponents of Jeremiah, who are not promising “peace”, but are encouraging rebellion against the invaders (לא תעבדו את־מלך בבל, “do not serve the king of Babylon”, in Jer 27:9, 15).

For the first time, the book of Jeremiah clarifies that not all those who prophesy falsehood are Yahwistic prophets, because even in foreign nations the prophets are spreading lies (Jer 27:3–4, while only in Jer 27:14–15 does the text present Yahwistic prophets, as implied by the expression בשמי, “in my name”, in Jer 27:15). The content of Jer 27:9 provides a long list of foretellers who are accused of falsehood. As well as avoiding the prophets, the people are warned not to follow diviners, interpreters of dreams, soothsayers and sorcerers. The term קסם, “divination”, is not new within the blaming of the prophets in Jeremiah (it appears in Jer 14:14–15); likewise, oneiromancy has been considered in a specific reprimand (Jer 23:25–32). The

²⁰⁰ See notes 190 and 191 above.

²⁰¹ Such considerations are found in Overholt, *Falsehood*, 25; Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 182; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 534–35; Thiel, *Radaktion* 26–45, 9; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 708; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 115; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 348; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 51; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 243; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 305 and 308.

poel pl. participle, עֲנִיכִם, “[your] soothsayers” in Jer 27:9, reads rather obscurely, although it appears elsewhere among the activities that YHWH despises (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10).²⁰² The word כִּשְׁף, “sorcery”, has few occurrences in the Hebrew Bible and always carries a negative meaning (especially Ex 22:18; Deut 18:10).²⁰³ It is interesting to notice that, per the biblical tradition, sorcerers are usually members of the courts of foreign rulers, such as Pharaoh’s (Ex 7:11) and Nebuchadnezzar’s (Dan 2:2); even the Phoenician queen Jezebel is said to have practised sorcery in Israel (2 Kgs 9:22). It appears that, within this list, the peculiar choice of vocabulary is meant to evoke an exotic scenario to match the references to foreign kingdoms,²⁰⁴ rather than to imply that these foretellers should be ignored because they practice forbidden divination.²⁰⁵ The focus is clearly on the message of these prophets, which introduces the second major difference from what we have encountered so far.

Generally, the promises of the prophets have been circumscribed to two domains; they reassure the people by announcing “peace” (Jer 6:14; 14:13; 23:17), or they swear that “sword, famine and plague” will never strike the nation (14:14–15). In Jer 27:9–10, however, there is no mention of peace, but the foretellers are encouraging their people to resist Babylon (Jer 27:9, 15). Moreover, given the scenario presented in Jer 27:3, the atmosphere seems to point towards the planning of an international rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar II, so that these prophets may not be promising peace at all, but rather fomenting war. Likewise, the counter-message of the prophet of the book has been drastically altered. In Jer 27, Jeremiah is no longer an anonymous voice that reports the faults of the prophets (which are promises of peace and prophecies of falsehood), but rather invokes a forthcoming judgement of YHWH; here, he becomes an outspoken supporter of the Babylonian empire and of Nebuchadnezzar II. It appears that the position of Jeremiah has been completely overturned with respect to the Babylonian invaders. Within the “foe from the North” cycle (Jer 4:5–6:30), Babylon is the “cruel and merciless” enemy (Jer 6:22) that brings “disaster and great destruction” (Jer 4:6; 6:1, 14), and the prophet of the book warns his people to flee and seek refuge to avoid

²⁰² Although we do not know which kind of witchcraft is represented by the term עֲנִיכִם, Lundbom considers that these kinds of foretellers may base their predictions on the observation of natural phenomena, such as the shape of clouds (in fact, “cloud” is the main meaning of the word עֲנִיכִם); see Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 21–36, 318.

²⁰³ It is not clear what the term כִּשְׁף may imply, but the cognate Akkadian verb *kašāpu*, “to bewitch, to enchant”, allows us to ascribe its meaning to the domain of witchcraft; see C. André, “כִּשְׁף”, in TDOT 7, 361.

²⁰⁴ This is a consideration made by Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 21–36, 317 and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 308, which seems likely.

²⁰⁵ That the emphasis of the passage is not on the *media* of divination, but on the words of the prophets, is considered by Overholt, *Falsehood*, 36. Similarly, also Holladay and Scalise, who both take the danger of these prophets to lie within their leading astray of the people; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 122 and Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 51. Conversely, J. Thompson seems to consider that the foretellers of Jer 27:9 are unreliable mostly because they use techniques that were banned in Israel; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 534.

destruction (Jer 4:6; 6:1). In Jer 27, on the other hand, first we have Nebuchadnezzar's celebration as the servant of YHWH (vv.5–7), and then we read the invitation to bow down before the might of his empire to avoid destruction and deportation (vv.8, 11). It seems safe to assume that the redactor(s) of Jer 27 reused the stereotypical materials of the blaming of the prophets and inserted them into an original oracle that sees the Babylonian domination as the theological prerogative for the final restoration of the people in the land (Jer 27:11). The Babylonian invasion is seen here as YHWH's plan for Judah, and thus, those who welcomed and endured it have earned the favour of the deity and a privileged place in the land. Such a claim cannot precede the fall of Jerusalem in 587, but, if anything, it should be inserted at least in the Persian period, as a claim of some group of returnees, who can now use their captivity in Babylon as a theological (and political) argument against other groups.²⁰⁶

Similarly, the episode of the prophets and their message about the return of the temple vessels (Jer 27:16–22) should be explained against the same backdrop. In the Bible, the fate of the treasure of the temple represents a more complicated matter than it may seem. Two different and conflicting traditions illustrate what happened to the sacred furnishings looted by the Babylonians. In the account of the first plundering of Jerusalem in 597 recurring in 2 Kgs 24:11–17, Nebuchadnezzar is said to have deported King Jeconiah and to have taken all the treasures housed in the temple and in the palace (other examples of this tradition are found in 2 Chr 36:7–18; Ezra 1:7; Dan 1:2). However, there is another version that reports that the Babylonians broke the temple furnishings into pieces prior their transportation to Babylon (2 Kgs 25:13; Jer 52:17). The contradictory implications of these two traditions are obvious; if the furnishings were preserved and transported undamaged to Babylon, they could at some point be returned to Jerusalem; conversely, if they had been destroyed, they would never ever be restored to the temple. Clearly, Jer 27:16–22 refers to the first tradition, but with a minor variant (some of the temple vessels remained in the city, in Jer 27:18), and responds to the needs of a community that is seeking continuity with its past. The return to the temple of the sacred furnishings stolen by Nebuchadnezzar represents the restoration of the community and

²⁰⁶ As regards these this golah-oriented revindications in Jeremiah, Pohlmann has made a convincing case that parts of the book of Jeremiah (especially but not exclusively Jer 37–44) underwent redaction which was meant to emphasize the role of the returnees as the real hope for the future of Judah; see Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch*, 19–31. Similar positions (which focus mostly on the community around Gedaliah) were already sustained by Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of the Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC* (OTL; London; SCM, 1968), 57. As regards Jer 27–29, Carroll highlights a peculiar pro-Babylonian strand throughout. Within this strand, the community of the exiles is seen as the only one which is worthy of YHWH's attention (e.g. Jer 24:4–7; 29:4–7, 10–14), which would suit the ideological agenda of a post-exilic group of returnees; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 532.

the unification of the old temple and the new.²⁰⁷ Anyone who could return from exile with these sacred paraphernalia would clearly benefit from an undisputed influence over the temple and the community. It is difficult to say to what purpose the prophets are inserted in this scenario,²⁰⁸ but a suitable solution is to consider the same theme in Jer 28:2–3 as the trigger for the insertion of this late pericope.²⁰⁹

As we see, it seems rather evident that the accusations aimed at the prophets in Jer 27 are modelled on the *leitmotif* of promising a false peace which is encountered elsewhere in Jeremiah. The context is clearly that of the Babylonian invasion (only implicitly referred to in the oracles regarding the “foe from the North”). Based on a core oracle presenting a symbolic message issued by YHWH to Jeremiah (Jer 27:2–3), the chapter has been expanded with the theological justification of the Babylonian’s domination as part of YHWH’s plan and a reflection on the fate of the temple treasure. The motif of promising peace presents in Jer 27 many stereotypical aspects that are intertwined with new significant elements, which are highlighted both in the message of the prophet of the book and in that of his counterparts.

²⁰⁷ This is the interpretation given by Ackroyd (followed by Carroll), who considers the theme of the temple vessels to be a metaphor for the continuity with the first temple; see Ackroyd, “The Temple Vessels: A Continuity Theme”, in G. W. Anderson *et alii* (eds.), *Studies of the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTS 23; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 177; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 537. On the contrary, McKane and Allen consider that the return of the temple vessels was part of the propaganda of the cultic establishment in Jerusalem in the period between the two deportations (597–587); see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 704; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 310.

²⁰⁸ Some commentators consider that this issue was probably of particular concern to the religious class, hence the words of Jeremiah spoken in front of the priests and the people (cf Jer 27:16); see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 122; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 52; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 321.

²⁰⁹ As assumed by both Carroll and McKane. Carroll considers that Jer 27:16–22 vindicates Hananiah’s prediction as regards the temple vessels, as they will come back when YHWH deems it right, just as Hananiah predicts in Jer 28:2–3; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 537. McKane rightly observes that this suggestion can apply only to the MT of Jer 27:22, as the earlier text of G is meant to contradict Hananiah’s statement. McKane uses this argument to suggest that, at least originally, the polemic about the return of the temple vessels should be considered as part of the debate in between the two deportations, because Hananiah’s oracle should also have been spoken before 587; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 705. Given the fact that the biblical tradition often confuses and conflates the account of the Babylonian invasions of 597 and 587, and that the book of Jeremiah presents different traditions as regards the fate of the temple vessels (Jer 27:22; 28:2–3; 52:17), which cannot be harmonized, we should dismiss McKane’s dating of this polemic. Be that as it may, the reading of G simply shows that there was indeed a debate about the temple furnishings, which evidently caught the attention of the redactors of the book of Jeremiah. Nonetheless, the Second Temple period appears to be the most suitable context for such a discussion.

4.1.2 Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer 28:1–15)

1 And it came to pass in the same year,²¹⁰ in the fourth year and in the fifth month of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah,²¹¹ that Hananiah, son of Azur, the prophet from Gibeon, in the temple of YHWH, spoke to me, in front of the priests and all the people, saying, 2 “Thus speaks YHWH of hosts, god of Israel, saying: ‘I have destroyed the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3 Within the days of two years, I will bring back to this very place all the vessels of the temple of YHWH, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took from this place and brought to Babylon. 4 And I will return in this place Jeconiah, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah, who went to Babylon, when I will destroy the yoke of the king of Babylon’, says YHWH”. 5 The prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in front of the priests and all the people that stood in the temple of YHWH. 6 And Jeremiah the prophet said, “Amen! May YHWH do so, that he will fulfill your words that you have prophesied, to bring back the vessels to the house of YHWH and every captive from Babylon to this place. 7 But now, come and listen to the word that I speak to your ears and to the ears of all the people. 8 The prophets who have been before me and before you from ancient times have prophesied against great lands and powerful kingdoms of war, evil and plague. 9 As for the prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of this prophet will come true, he will be known as a prophet sent by YHWH”. 10 Then the prophet Hananiah took the yoke-bar off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah and destroyed it.²¹² 11 Then Hananiah spoke in front of all the people, saying, “Just like this, within the days of two years, I will destroy the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, off the neck of all the nations”. Then, the prophet Jeremiah went on his way.

12 Then the word of YHWH came to Jeremiah, after the prophet Hananiah destroyed the yoke-bar off the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “Go and speak to Hananiah saying, ‘Thus speaks YHWH, you have broken wooden bars,²¹³ but you have turned them into yokes of iron’. 14 Thus speaks YHWH of hosts, god of Israel, ‘I put a yoke of iron upon the necks of all these nations to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and

²¹⁰ The mention that the events of Jer 28 happened in the same year as those of Jer 27 is not in G and is probably a secondary redactional link; see Birght, *Jeremiah*, 200; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 35; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 710; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 538; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 124; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 43; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 356.

²¹¹ MT presents an improbable double dating for this episode, which either took place in the fifth month of the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah (597) or in the fifth month of the fourth year of his ruling (594), but both cannot be right. The shorter text of G probably preserved an earlier version, Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ ἔτει Σεδεκία βασιλέως Ιουδα ἐν μηνὶ τῷ πέμπτῳ, “and it happened in the fourth year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the fifth month”. The reading of G is generally preferred in this instance; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 537; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 124; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 538; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 356; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 312.

²¹² MT presents a masculine suffix (וַיִּשְׁבְּרֵהוּ, “and destroyed it”) but the referent is the feminine מוֹטֶה, “bar”. Carroll considers dittography (due to the *waw* at the beginning of Jer 28:11) or confusion between the terms מוֹטֶה (fem.) and עַל (masc.); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 539. Holladay instead considers that the final *waw* may represent a copyist’s mistake for the final *nun* of the feminine pl. form. Although the right correction is difficult to ascertain, there is little doubt that MT carries some sort of error.

²¹³ MT reads the pl. form (מוֹטֹת) in v.13, but presents the sing. מוֹטֶה, “bar”, in Jer 28:10, 12. G instead always presents sing. forms for this term throughout this chapter. Holladay emends the pl. suffix into a sing., for consistency; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 125. Similarly, Friebel has argued for an erroneous pointing in this occurrence, and that a sing. form is intended; Kevin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts* (JOTS 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 142. Thus, the pl. form may represent an error, but the text makes good sense as it is.

they will serve him. I have even given him the beast of the lands.”¹⁵ 15 And Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet, “You shall listen, Hananiah, YHWH has not sent you and you have caused this people to trust in falsehood. 16 Therefore, thus speaks YHWH, ‘Now I will get rid of you from the face of the earth’. You will die this year, because you have fostered rebellion against YHWH.” 17 And the prophet Hananiah died in that same year, in the seventh month.

The opening verse (Jer 28:1) provides precise settings for this episode, placing it in the fourth year of King Zedekiah (594), and connecting it to the events of the previous chapter by the redactional expression *בשנה ההיא*, “in the same year” (see also Jeremiah’s symbolic action, in Jer 27:3 and 28:10). Hence, this chapter has been considered a biographical account of the “historical” Jeremiah,²¹⁴ and several scholars have held that his dispute with Hananiah establishes criteria for the distinction between “true” and “false” prophets.²¹⁵ However, both these assumptions appear to be mistaken, and in the following it will be argued that the interest that this chapter displays in the theme of prophecy only serves to promote a post-exilic, pro-Babylonian ideology.

As regards the outline of the text, the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah covers the entirety of Jer 28, and some scholars read it as a uniform literary unit.²¹⁶ However, v.11b marks a *caesura* (e.g. the sentence *וילך ירמיה הנביא לדרכו*, “and the prophet Jeremiah went on his way”) and divides the chapter into at least two sections (vv.1–11 and 12–17).²¹⁷ Besides, scholars commonly consider the presence of several discrete units in the chapter and propose different solutions as to its outline.²¹⁸ There is little doubt that this chapter overall shows evident traces of later editorial activity and literary growth.

²¹⁴ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 202; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 37; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 36; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 538; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 127; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 349.

²¹⁵ As regards this, see Osswald, *Falsche Prophetie*, 23ff; Hossfeld & Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet*, 90ff; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 24ff; Hans W. Wolff, *Confrontations with Prophets* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 67ff. That the main topic of this chapter is the differentiation between “true” and “false” prophets is also considered by Nicholson, *Jeremiah*, 38; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 538; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 355-56; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 248.

²¹⁶ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 203; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 537.

²¹⁷ Allen works with this exact division; see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 315. Conversely, Nicholson, although maintaining the division in two major sections, opt for vv.1–9, 10–17; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 35.

²¹⁸ As regards this, Cunliffe-Jones works with the division vv.1–4, 5–9, 10–12, 13–15, 16–17; see Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 184. Overholt considers instead three units (vv.1–4, 5–11, 12–16) and a concluding announcement in v.17; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 38. Holladay splits the chapter in four sections, assuming that the two prophets alternate in a dialogue; he follows the pattern, Hananiah (vv.1–4), Jeremiah (vv. 5–9), Hananiah (vv.10–11) and Jeremiah (vv.12–16), plus the conclusion in v.17; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 126. Finally, Scalise considers five literary units, according to the scheme, vv.1–4, 5–9, 10–11, 12–14, 15–17; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 46.

4.1.2.1 Redaction History

The core oracle of Jer 28 is found in vv.2–4, 10–11,²¹⁹ which deal with the traditional motif of the yoke worn by the prophet (Jer 27:2–3), as a connection between chs. 27 and 28.²²⁰ This original layer comprises the bulk of the disputation between the prophets, in which Hananiah exposes Jeremiah's yoke as a deceitful symbol of submission and turns it into a sign of the forthcoming demise of Babylon. He assures his audience that the Babylonian empire will be destroyed, and that the temple furnishings, the legitimate king Jeconiah and the exiles will come back to the land (vv.3–4). The original episode ends with Hananiah, who moves from words to deeds and breaks Jeremiah's yoke, leaving the prophet speechless (vv.10–11).

The reflection about the nature of doom and *shalom* prophecy (Jer 28:5–9) represents another secondary layer that has been added as a theological commentary to Hananiah's words. This *excursus* is clearly unconnected to the main theme of the core oracle, namely the duration of Babylon's sovereignty over Judah, and echoes similar reflections about the trustworthiness of prophecy found in Deut 18:20–22.²²¹ Jeremiah states that the only way a prophecy of *shalom* could be considered true is through its fulfillment. It seems clear that, within this passage, a later redactor has developed an argument against Hananiah by reusing Deuteronomistic materials and in a retrospective consideration of the events of 587. By the time Hananiah released his prediction (Jer 28:3–4), it was impossible to ascertain whether he was right or wrong, and only the test of time would provide the answer. The insertion of this theological explanation should be read as a *memento* of what happened after the first deportation.

Similarly, the breaking of the wooden yoke in v.10 has triggered the insertion of yet another secondary insertion (Jer 28:12–14), which introduces the theological interpretation of the Babylonian dominion as decreed by YHWH. The content of Jer 28:14 reuses the theological

²¹⁹ Nicholson, Thiel and McKane both agree that Jer 28:5–9 are secondary, which places the original account of what happened between Hananiah and Jeremiah in 28:2–4, 10–14; see Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 96ff; Thiel, *Redaktion 26-45*, 10; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 725. Similarly, although not being concerned with redaction criticism, also Scalise points out an incongruity in the chapter, and she argues that the breaking of the yoke (Jer 28:10–11) should have happened before Jeremiah replied to Hananiah's prophecy (Jer 28:5–9); see Scalise, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 54.

²²⁰ The metaphor of the yoke worn by the prophet is clearly the basic connection between Jer 27 and 28, as supposed by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 202; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 538; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 543; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 127. Nicholson goes as far as to state that the episodes reported in Jer 27–28, at least in the intentions of the redactors, probably happened on the same day; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 36.

²²¹ Because of this resemblance, a Deuteronomistic redaction for this section has been suggested; see Nicholson, *God and His People*, 96; Thiel, *Redaktion 26-45*, 10. The similarities with Deuteronomy (as regards prophecy, see Deut 18:20–22; an iron yoke to symbolize oppression is mentioned in Deut 28:48) are maintained by Bright, *Jeremiah*, 203; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 544 and Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 129.

imagery of Nebuchadnezzar as the servant of YHWH (Jer 27:6–7) to stress the need to bow down before his authority.²²² Moreover, since Jeremiah had no words for Hananiah after he broke the yoke, the direct intervention of YHWH in the story (Jer 28:12) marks a new development. It should be considered that these verses signal the first direct intervention of YHWH within this chapter, so it is possible that vv.12–14 have been added precisely to redeem the silence of Jeremiah in the original core (vv.2–4, 10–11); thus, when Jeremiah replies to Hananiah, he does so to voice YHWH’s message against him.²²³

As regards this, the transition between vv.11b and 12 troubles the continuity of events within Jer 28. Apparently, the argument between Jeremiah and Hananiah was not resolved within one single confrontation, so Jeremiah had to come back to resume the combat after receiving the word of YHWH (the sequence of actions is as follows, וילך ירמיה הנביא לדרכו, “the prophet Jeremiah went on his way”, in v.11b; ויהי דברייהוה אל־ירמיה, “the word of YHWH came to Jeremiah”, v.12a; and הלך ואמר אל־חנניה, “[YHWH said to Jeremiah] go and speak to Hananiah” in v.13). Many commentators are not discouraged by the perplexing delay of Jeremiah’s reply, arguing that a prophet should only speak when the word of YHWH comes to him and/or that the messages of the deity come when his prophets are secluded or in forced solitude.²²⁴ Nonetheless, the origin of Jer 28:12–14 as a later addition provides a more plausible explanation for the delayed reply of Jeremiah.

Finally, the last addition to Jer 28 is represented by vv.15–17.²²⁵ Many commentators understand this unit to be the legitimate corollary to the dispute between the prophets Jeremiah

²²² Scalise acknowledges the strong resemblances between Jer 27:5–11 and Jer 28:12–14, but prefers to take the two pericopes as independent parallels; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 57. It should be considered that the sentence MT וגם את־חית השדה נתתי לו “I have even given him the beast of the lands” in Jer 28:14b (which is similar to Jer 27:6b) is absent in G, and represents a later addition in MT; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 54; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 125; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 43. This implies that, at some point, the editors had a clear idea of the connection between these two passages and even tried to emphasize it further. On the other hand, Allen suggests that the entirety of v.14 represents a supplementation to Jer 28:12–13, which is a possibility; see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 318.

²²³ Carroll (followed by Scalise) rightly considers the involvement of YHWH in the dispute between Hananiah and Jeremiah as part of a later development; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 545; Scalise, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 57.

²²⁴ See Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 228; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 198; J. Thompson, *The book of Jeremiah*, 540; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 129; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 358; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 25-52, 55. Nicholson (followed by Allen) even argues that Jeremiah in the meantime probably acquired an iron yoke to reinforce the message of his symbolic action; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 40; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 316. To mitigate the oddness of this delay, Allen even considers that Jeremiah already had to wait a while for a pertinent word from YHWH already in another occasion. He compares Jer 28 to the episode of Jeremiah at the potter’s workshop (Jer 18:2–5), but his speculations as to the time needed to glaze the clay (10 days) do not seem particularly suited to solving the continuity of Jer 28; see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 214, 317.

²²⁵ For the lateness of these verses, see Nicholson, *God and His People*, 96-7; Thiel, *Redaktion* 26-45, 10; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 725. Similarly, also Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 538.

and Hananiah (especially vv.5–9).²²⁶ The pericope Jer 28:15–17 evidently contradicts most of Jer 28, especially the reflections on doom and *shalom* prophecy. In Jer 28:15–17, Jeremiah brusquely denies Hananiah the benefit of the doubt previously granted to his words (Jer 28:6, 9), dismisses Hananiah’s prediction as blatant falsehood, boastfully proclaims YHWH’s rejection of him and even predicts his imminent death.²²⁷ The problem with the interpretation of Jer 28:15–17 as the conclusion of an articulated prophetic conflict (Jer 28:2–4, 5–9, 12–14) is linked to the view that, in the Bible, prophetic gifts can be legitimate or not. This preconception has influenced many scholars’ interpretation of Jer 28, and especially that of vv.5–9. Contrary to what is considered by many, this passage does not reject *shalom* prophecy as “false” or untrustworthy form of divination,²²⁸ but highlights a contrast between salvation and doom oracles. Doom oracles belonged to a more established tradition, thus they do not need any formal defense for their validation (v.8). On the contrary, peace oracles were part of a less-established field, and only their fulfillment would have legitimated their status as words

²²⁶ There is a tendency among commentators to take the content of Jer 28:15–17 to be the climax of the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah as regards the reliability of their respective prophecies. Eventually, Jeremiah exposes Hananiah’s falsehood and foretells his death as his rightful punishment (Deut 18:20); see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 45; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 36; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 541; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 129; Clements, *Jeremiah*, 167; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 356; Scalise et alii, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 58; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 248.

²²⁷ As regards this, McKane rightly considers Jer 28:15–17 the “biggest impediment to the coherence of chapter 28”, in McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 719. Of the same opinion, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 544.

²²⁸ Some commentators consider that Hananiah cannot be considered a “true” prophet because *shalom* prophecy is alien to the prophetic tradition of Israel; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 202; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 38; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 540; Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 128; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 248; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 316. More interesting and articulated is Brueggemann’s reconstruction when he considers that, unlike the other “false” prophets in the book of Jeremiah, Hananiah is not an opportunist that wants to gain the favour of the people. In Brueggemann’s view, Hananiah is a representative of a traditional theology, which never doubted that YHWH would have always preserved the kingdom and his people. He was eventually proved wrong, but there was no malice in his words; see Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 25. Brueggemann’s statement is to the point as regards the presence of a conflict of ideologies (rather than “theologies”) at the core of the confrontation between the prophets. However, Brueggemann’s placing of Hananiah within the religious establishment of Jerusalem is an unfortunate blunder. If, as Hananiah hopes, the exiles will soon return with the legitimate king Jeconiah, Babylon’s vassal Zedekiah, who sits on the throne (Jer 28:1) and represents the current establishment, will be forced to abdicate (as noted by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 543 and McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 716). Thus, Hananiah’s prediction is clearly opposing the establishment, while Jeremiah’s message to accept Babylon’s dominance supports it. Others have proposed similar views, taking Hananiah as the expression of the central cult and Jeremiah as a peripheral prophet who stands outside the prophetic guild; see Henry Mottu, “Jeremiah vs. Hananiah: Ideology and Truth in Old Testament Prophecy”, in Norman K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (BL; London: Orbis Books, 1983), 235-51. However, too little is said of Hananiah to support such arguments; moreover, it should be considered that in the cycle Jer 27–29, Jeremiah is not at all the unpopular prophet who courageously professes the message of YHWH and risks his own life, as seen elsewhere in the book (Jer 11:21–23). Quite the opposite! In fact, he speaks directly to the king and to the ambassadors and endorses the cause of the Babylonian dominator in front of the people and the priests in the temple.

of YHWH (v.9).²²⁹ Hence, Jeremiah showed himself to be more sympathetic towards Hananiah than may have seemed from the spiteful comment in vv.15–17 (especially when he said, אמן, “Amen! May YHWH do so”, in v.6).²³⁰

In conclusion, three different strands of tradition should be distinguished in the redaction history of Jer 28. The first one (Jer 28:2–4, 10–11, 12–14) is not concerned with prophecy but revolves around the theological significance of the Babylonian invasion and the subsequent captivity in Mesopotamia. It is not surprising that about such a relevant topic the tradition has developed contrasting positions and reflections. In Jer 28:2–4, 10–11, Hananiah represents an anti-Babylonian stance, which claims that YHWH will destroy the overlords to re-establish the *status quo* and the continuity with the first temple. Jeremiah, in a later addition, instead speaks on behalf of a pro-Babylonian party, which considers the exile as a necessary evil and an integral part of YHWH’s plan for his people (Jer 28:12–14). To this first strand, two other elements, which are more rooted in the prophetic tradition, have been added. In Jer 28:5–9, we have considerations of the differences between *shalom* and doom prophecy, which are clearly connected to the Deuteronomic tradition and do not really engage with the unreliability of prophecy but encourage a retrospective reflection on the events of 587. Conversely, in Jer 28:15–17, the stereotypical motif against the prophets who spread falsehood is used against Hananiah, even though his words cannot even be considered false, because, although not within two years, his prediction did come true.²³¹

4.1.2.2 Jeremiah vs. Hananiah, a *Non-Strictly* Prophetic Conflict

As the redactional analysis suggests, highlighting a prophetic conflict was not the main concern of the core oracle Jer 28:2–4, 10–11. Moreover, even the overall reading of Jer 28 as

²²⁹ This is the interpretation of Jer 28:5–9 given by Carroll (followed by Scalise), which appears to be the most plausible. Carroll is right in considering that the problem of “false” prophecy is not a concern of this pericope, and similarly, also the equation *shalom* prophecy = false prophecy must be dismissed. The unit simply states that these two different categories of prophecy need different criteria of validation; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 547–48; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 55.

²³⁰ The words of Jeremiah in v.6 are often interpreted as a sincere auspice, although some scepticism on the behalf of Jeremiah has to be assumed; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 203; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 539; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 544; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 54; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 317. Conversely, Nicholson takes Jeremiah’s words to be a sardonic statement, and Holladay states that Jeremiah probably had little or no hope to see Hananiah’s prediction fulfilled; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 37; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 128.

²³¹ As regards this, Carroll notices that Hananiah’s prediction was not even wrong. He was right at least about the demise of Babylon and the return of the exiles. Likewise, also the temple furnishings did come back to Israel (as is stated in Ezra 1:7). Hananiah’s prediction which predates the fall of Jerusalem by two years may have been too optimistic about timing, but it was correct nonetheless; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 537.

part of the classic conflict between “true” and “false” prophets hardly provides a problem-free interpretation. In the book, Jeremiah is a “true” prophet because he speaks the truth; the text does not offer other insights into this topic. However, it is interesting to notice that were it not for their conflicting positions, Hananiah and Jeremiah would be almost indistinguishable in this text; they both wear the title of נביא, “prophet”; they both come from the province and not from the capital city; they are both Yahwistic prophets; and finally, they both prophesy in the temple in Jerusalem.²³²

It has been suggested that the most significant difference between the two is to be found in their prophetic messages, because Hananiah speaks of peace (like many other traditional “false” prophets), while Jeremiah is generally described as a prophet of doom. Although it has often been accepted as an obvious conclusion, there are no grounds to assume that Hananiah was a *shalom* prophet, as Jeremiah’s words may imply (Jer 28:7–9). Hananiah never speaks of peace in this text (the word שלום appears only once, and it is pronounced by Jeremiah, Jer 28:9); on the contrary, he foresees doom and destruction for Babylon (Jer 28:3, 11). Jeremiah states that the prophets of the olden days usually spoke of war and disaster in powerful nations (Jer 28:8b), which is exactly what Hananiah does (שברתי את־על מלך בבל, “I will destroy the yoke of Babylon”, in v.2b).²³³ If anything, Hananiah represents very clearly the prophetic tradition from which he has been categorically excluded by many scholars. Such problems of interpretation of the figure of Hananiah in Jer 28 are due to the ambiguous attitude with which this book generally addresses “prophecy” and “prophets”. It seems evident now that labels such as “true” or “false” prophecy are inadequate to deal with the blaming of the prophets in this book, since the veracity or the falsehood of prophecy and prophets are nothing more than points of view. The words of Hananiah present a perfect case to show that such accusations (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 27:9–10, 14–15, 16–17) have little or nothing to do with establishing if the prophets’ messages were irrefutably true or false, and consequently with distinguishing them between good and bad ones.

In order to recognize a “true” prophet, the criterion that appears most often in the Hebrew Bible is that of fulfilment of prophecies (e.g. 1 Kgs 22:18; Deut 18:21–22; Jer 23:16; Ezek

²³² As considered by Carrol, *Jeremiah*, 541; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 23; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 53.

²³³ As stated by Carroll, who compares the words of Hananiah against Babylon to those spoken by Isaiah against Assyria (Isa 10:12–19); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 544; followed by Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 55. Similarly, also Brueggemann, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 25.

12:24–28; 13:3), which is, on the other hand, generally troublesome to employ.²³⁴ The text of Jer 28 is quite explicit in considering that only in due course would it be possible to ascertain if Hananiah's words were endorsed by YHWH (Jer 28:9); hence, Jeremiah's accusation of falsehood (Jer 28:15) is unfounded. Hananiah cannot be called a liar until his words are proven to be wrong, and what is interesting in this regard is that Hananiah's prediction is so well detailed that it could easily be shown to be false if measured against the criterion of fulfilment. If, within two years, the temple furnishings, the legitimate king and the captives from Babylon were to return to Jerusalem, then his words would represent a crystalline example of "true" prophecy. However, long before this period has passed, Jeremiah accuses Hananiah of falsehood and rebellion against YHWH (Jer 28:15–16). The chapter does not specify when Jeremiah resumes the argument against Hananiah (Jer 28:11b–12), but since they first clashed in the fifth month of 594 (Jer 28:1), and Hananiah died in the seventh month (Jer 28:17), the intervening period could not have been longer than two months. It seems evident that the proof of Hananiah's falsehood is nowhere to be found in this text. The logical conclusion that we should draw is that the conflict between Hananiah and Jeremiah is certainly not strictly prophetic, meaning that "prophecy" is merely instrumental in the polemic in the text, which, on the other hand, presents an ideological conflict displayed on two separate levels.

Within the cycle Jer 27–29, more than anywhere else, the book of Jeremiah presents and compares contrasting views about the role of YHWH in the Babylonian military invasion, the duration of the captivity and finally the return of the exiles and the temple furnishings. Thus, the original core of this oracle (Jer 28:2–4, 10–11) is obviously connected to the general motif of submission to Babylon, which represents the first level of ideological conflict in the text. Hananiah supports an anti-Babylonian position, although it is impossible to outline it with more precision. Similarly, Jeremiah's message is easily interpreted as being pro-Babylonian, but once again, the implications of this ideology are not at all clear in the text; he does wear a yoke as a sign of submission, but he does not speak at all. It is true that Jeremiah is an outspoken supporter of submission to Babylon in Jer 27 (Jer 27:6–8, 11), and that he clearly envisages a long stay in Babylon for the captives in Jer 29 (Jer 29:4–7). However, it is better to read Jer 28 independently, because (a one in a million case!) it presents Jeremiah as being unusually

²³⁴ It should be considered that prophesies in the Hebrew Bible are usually too general and conditional to be tested against the criterion of fulfilment. Similarly, only a minority of the sayings attributed to the prophets are strictly "predictive", so that the employment of such a criterion should not even be considered within the definition of a prophet in the Hebrew Bible; see Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 49–52. Yet another detailed analysis as to the difficulties regarding the giving and understanding of predictions of the future is found in Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, 29–37.

miserable and speechless when face with his adversary, which is an extremely different portrait from his general depiction; thus, it may point to an independent tradition that is rarely seen in the final form of the book.²³⁵ However, Hananiah and Jeremiah embody conflicting ideologies as regards the significance of the Babylonian exile within the history of the chosen people.

In addition, the branding of Hananiah with the stigma of falsehood clearly represents another level of ideology which is inserted in the chapter (Jer 28:15–17). Hananiah, despite not having said anything that could be objectively proven to be “false”, is treated in the same way as all the other prophets in the book who dared to antagonize Jeremiah. This development is clearly part of the later redaction of the book of Jeremiah, in which the prophet emerges as the highest form of authority for the community (e.g. Jeremiah speaks to the ambassadors of foreign kings and directly to King Zedekiah, in Jer 27; he addresses Hananiah in the temple, in front of all the people and priests, in Jer 28). Remarkably, at first, Jeremiah cannot reply to the words of Hananiah and leaves the temple; moreover, he shows some sincere sympathy for his colleague, and wishes his prediction could come true. At some point, however, Jeremiah's benevolence towards Hananiah in the text must have created some bewilderment, and the redactors did not hesitate to depict the prophet from Gibeon as a blatant liar who was devoted to fomenting sedition against YHWH, in order to underline that only Jeremiah was the devote mouthpiece of YHWH and the spiritual leader of the community.

To conclude, the blaming of Hananiah for his “falsehood” was only later intertwined with the theme of submission to Babylon. Thus, the clash between a “true” and a “false” prophet may emerge only as a secondary interpretation of this episode and may have been strongly influenced by the ideological agenda of later redactors (e.g. the Greek version labels Hananiah as ὁ ψευδοπροφήτης, “the false prophet”, even before he had any chance to speak!). However, this should not affect our ability to separate different diachronical stages of redaction in this text and to consider the accusation of falsehood exclusively as part of the final stage of a long process of literary and ideological elaboration.

²³⁵ This is a comment held by Carroll, which seems to be the point; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 540.

4.1.3 YHWH Has Raised Up Prophets for Us in Babylon

The text of Jer 29 is problematic and there is agreement in scholarship in considering extensive editorial expansion and redactional work throughout.²³⁶ Nonetheless, scholars still disagree about the division of this chapter into literary units.²³⁷ As regards the content of Jeremiah 29, this chapter purports to present a letter written by Jeremiah and addressed to the Golah community in Babylon, after the first deportation (Jer 29:1–3). Although the circumstances of interactions between faraway communities are plausible (e.g. the Elephantine Papyri are evidence of an analogous case of correspondence), it is unlikely that this chapter could comprise an original letter from Jeremiah (or even more than one).²³⁸ As is the case for Jer 27–28, it seems that also Jer 29 is part of a late post-exilic strand in the book of Jeremiah. Once again, the prophet Jeremiah is depicted as the most authoritative figure not only for Judah, but also for Babylon, where he can call judgement on members of the diaspora community by means of the written word (Jer 29:22–23). It is therefore safe to take the framework of the letter

²³⁶ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, p210ff; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 42; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 55ff; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 736ff; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 359; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 64. Holladay is instead more prone to accept that Jer 29 contains original materials from Jeremiah, although he acknowledges that the chapter has been assembled by the editors later, which would account for the difficulties in establishing a text; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 134-35.

²³⁷ Scholars have provided several different solutions regarding the hypothetical core oracle of Jer 29, and even a greater range of possibilities has then been considered with regard to all the subsequent additions. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive of all the approaches proposed but should provide a reasonable range of the possible conclusions. Thus, Duhm has considered as the core of the chapter a letter written by Jeremiah, redacted by Baruch, in vv.1, 3, 4a, 11-13, 14 (preference to the text of G), 15, 21-23, 24, 26-29; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 236. Bright works with the units, vv.1-3 (editorial introduction), vv.4-14, 16-20, 15, 21-23, 24-32; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 211. Nicholson considers the chapter a product of several Deuteronomistic redactors, and works with the units, vv.1-3, 4, 5-7 (the core oracle), 8-9, 10-14, 16-20, 15, 21-23, 24-32; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 41ff. Thiel considers the core oracle in vv.1-3, 4-13, 14 (preference to the text of G), 25, 26-30, 31a, 32a; see Thiel, *Redaktion* 26-45, 19. Holladay takes the text of the letter written by Jeremiah in vv.1-7 as the core, which was implemented later by the editors with two blocks of Jeremianic materials in vv.8-23, 24-32; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 137. Scalise considers, besides the editorial introduction vv.1-3, a unit in vv.4-7, then implemented with the additions of vv.8-9, 10-14, 16-20, 15, 21-23, 25-32; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah*, 67.

²³⁸ Although some assume that only one letter from Jeremiah appears in Jer 29 (see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 211; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 139), others point out that at least two should be considered. This is the opinion of Nicholson, Scalise and Allen, who take vv.1-23 to be a first letter sent by Jeremiah, and a second one in vv.24-32; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 40; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 66; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 322. J. Thompson instead considers four separate letters brought together in Jer 29; two from Jeremiah to the exiles (vv.1-23; 30-32), one from Jeremiah to Shemaiah (v.24), and one from Shemaiah to Zephaniah (vv.25-30); see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 544. Nonetheless, Brueggemann is right in considering that the text of Jer 29 does not quite resemble a proper letter or a collection of letters but is more likely just another series of oracles; see Brueggemann, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 31. Similarly, also Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 568.

as a rhetoric device which is meant to emphasize the role of Jeremiah as prophet to the nations (a characteristic of Jeremiah's ministry that appears in the prologue, Jer 1:10).²³⁹

As regards the outline of Jer 29, after an editorial introduction (Jer 29:1–3),²⁴⁰ the text presents four major blocks. Firstly, a message from the prophet of the book to the deportees which says that their stay in Babylon will be long, so they should embrace their new country as their own and work for its good and prosper there (Jer 29:4–7). This first text probably constitutes the core oracle.²⁴¹ Secondly, the well-known prophecy of 70 years of exile, after which YHWH will visit his people and bring them back to their land (Jer 29:10–14). This oracle is secondary, as it presents a precise duration for the exile probably in an attempt to counterbalance the indefinite permanence in Babylon presented in Jer 29:4–7.²⁴² Thirdly, an oracle against the Davidic dynasty and the people who stayed in Jerusalem (Jer 29:16–19), which however does not appear in the Greek version and seems to be out of context, because it is not of any relevance for the deportee community. There is general agreement as to its secondary character.²⁴³ Finally, the chapter closes with the complaints of Shemaiah the Nehelamite (Jer 29:24–29), allegedly a prominent figure among the Golah community, who sent a letter to the chief of the temple in Jerusalem, Zephaniah, questioning his decision not to put Jeremiah into stocks for his foolish claims of a long exile in Babylon for the deportees. Jer 20:24–29 also probably constitutes an editorial expansion.²⁴⁴ Three short passages (Jer 29:8–9; 21–23; 30–32), marked off as secondary additions and appended to the four major units considered above, present accusations against the prophets and complete the outline of Jer 29.

²³⁹ This is the understanding of Carroll, who rightly recalls that in the whole cycle Jer 27–29, Jeremiah appears as a legendary figure who embodies YHWH's word. The implicit message in the words aimed at the prophets in foreign nations (Jer 27), in Jerusalem (Jer 28) and in Babylon (Jer 29) cannot be mistaken, whoever opposes Jeremiah is going against YHWH himself; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 567.

²⁴⁰ For the lateness of the superscription, see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 211; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 555; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 139 (who however ascribes the superscription to Baruch).

²⁴¹ See Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 41ff; Thiel, *Redaktion* 26–45, 19; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 137; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah*, 67.

²⁴² See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 557; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 738; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 325. Similarly, also Nicholson and Thiel, who on the other hands ascribe the later development in vv.10–14 to Deuteronomistic redactors; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 46; Thiel, *Redaktion* 26–45, 16.

²⁴³ Although some scholars have considered that the absence of Jer 29:16–20 in G may be due to homoioteleuton (see the recurrence of the expression בבלה, "in Babylon", at the end of vv.15 and 20; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 135), it would be too fortuitous a case that a copyist may have omitted by mistake exactly what in MT is widely suspected to be an addition. Hence, it is a common understanding that these verses are a later development; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 211; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 544; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 737; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 367; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 67.

²⁴⁴ See Duhm, *Jeremia*, 236; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 211; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 41ff; Thiel, *Redaktion* 26–45, 19; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 563; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 137.

The vocabulary used in Jer 29:8–9; 21–23; 30–32 is deeply rooted in the traditional motif of blaming the prophets for having prophesied falsehood and promised peace.

4.1.3.1 What is the “Falsehood” Spread by the Prophets? (Jer 29:8–9)

8 Thus says YHWH of hosts, god of Israel, do not let the prophets among you, and the diviners, deceive you; do not listen to your dreams that you dream.²⁴⁵ 9 Because by falsehood they are prophesying to you in my name. I did not send them, oracle of YHWH.

The bicolon Jer 29:8–9 represents a secondary addition, which was inserted right after Jeremiah’s first message to the exiles in Babylon (Jer 29:4–7). The accusations against the diviners for their prophecies of falsehood appear abruptly in the context. The messenger formula at the beginning (כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה) and the oracular one at the end (נְאֻם־יְהוָה) frame the accusation aimed at the prophets in Jer 29:8–9, which is connected to the previous unit, nor seems to relate to the following one, because they deal with the duration of the captivity in Babylon.²⁴⁶

Theme and terminology of Jer 29:8–9 closely resemble that of the accusations aimed at the prophets for having prophesied falsehood and/or promised peace we have observed elsewhere in the book, so there is no doubt as to the origins of these verses. Moreover, Jer 29:8 instantly recalls the similar but longer list of foretellers in Jer 27:9 (notwithstanding that in Jer 29:8, the professional diviners are clearly Yahwistic, and not foreigners; see the expression בְּשֵׁמי, “in my name”). Some sort of literary dependency between these two passages has been assumed,²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ The MT reads אל־תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־חִלְמֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם מַחְלִמִּים, “do not listen to your dreams that you cause to be dreamed”, with the only occurrence of the *hiphil* participle of the verb חָלַם, “to dream”, in the Hebrew Bible. The meaning of the sentence is difficult to work out because of the second person pl. suffix (to your dreams), so some corruption may be assumed. The text of G does not translate here a *hiphil* participle, but presents an active form, μὴ ἀκούετε εἰς τὰ ἐνύπνια ὑμῶν, ἃ ὑμεῖς ἐνυπνιάζεσθε, “do not listen to your dreams that you dream” and is sometimes preferred to MT; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 62. McKane, on the other hand, reshuffles the vowels of the expression חִלְמֵיכֶם and preserves the *hiphil*, reading “[do not listen] to your dreamers, whom you set to dream”; see McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 727. Similarly, also Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 132 and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 319. There is no doubt that the MT of Jer 28:9 suffered in the transmission and it is difficult to restore a plausible reading, hence the preference for the one attested by G.

²⁴⁶ The secondary character of Jer 29:8–9 is considered by Thiel, *Redaktion* 26–45, 13; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 738; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 556; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 363.

²⁴⁷ Carroll considers that the reference to diviners (קְסָמִיכֶם) in Jer 29:8 is seen only in Jer 27:9 and concludes that one might have directly influenced the other; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 557. Similarly, Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 72.

even though it should be considered that YHWH's rejection (in the clause, לֹא שְׁלַחְתִּים, "I did not send them", in Jer 29:8) does not recur in Jer 27:9, but appears both in Jer 27:15 and 28:15 (and outside of the cycle 27–29, in Jer 14:15; 23:21). Hence, it seems safer to consider Jer 27:9 and 29:8 as two distinct passages which belong to the same tradition, rather than arguing for direct literary dependency.

The major problem with this text is that it warns the people not to listen to the prophets, and yet it never bothers to explain what the message that the captives should avoid following is. As regards this, due to the similarities in language and context, scholars tend to assimilate the message of the prophets in Babylon with that of their counterparts in the land and in the surrounding kingdoms (Jer 27–28). This solution, which probably manages to account for the aim of the redactor who inserted this excerpt here, does not help provide a smooth interpretation of the falsehood of their words. As a matter of fact, the prophets in Jer 27–28 have proclaimed different messages, such as rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar (27:8, 13), that the temple furnishing would return soon (Jer 27:16; occasionally, with King Jeconiah and the exiles, Jer 28:4) and that Babylon would fall within two years (Jer 28:3, 11). We must admit that the text of Jer 29:8–9 is particularly scant in detail, and no evidence is given that the prophets are either promising a short exile,²⁴⁸ or are fomenting a rebellion against the Babylonians.²⁴⁹ Once again, it seems safe to conclude that the falsehood of these diviners is not to be found in their words, but rather in their status as opponents of Jeremiah. Whoever inserted this pericope, most probably wanted to create a thematic connection between Jer 29 and the previous chapters Jer 27–28, rather than highlight and contrast an actual prophetic message, which was disseminated by sinful prophets and diviners in Babylon.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ This is the interpretation of Bright, *Jeremiah*, 210; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 45; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 545. Jones considers that the prophets in Jer 29:8 are telling the people what they want to hear, so that he seems to take their false message to be the promise of a short exile (in contrast to Jer 29:5–7); see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 363. Similarly, also Allen, *Jeremiah*, 324.

²⁴⁹ See Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 46; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 141; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 251. Similarly, also Scalise (although stating that the content of their falsehood is anything but clear) considers that the prophets are contrasting the peaceful message of coexistence with the Babylonians in Jer 29:7; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 72.

²⁵⁰ As regards this, see Thiel, *Redaktion 26–45*, 11, 13; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 556; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 738.

4.1.3.2 Were Ahab and Zedekiah prophets? (Jer 29:21–23)

21 Thus says YHWH of hosts, god of Israel, about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah,²⁵¹ who prophesy to you in my name falsely,²⁵² “Behold, I will give them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes. 22 From them, a curse shall spread among all the exiles of Judah that are in Babylon, saying, ‘May YHWH do to you as he did to Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon burned in the fire’. 23 Because they did an outrageous thing in Israel and committed adultery with the wives of their neighbours and spoke in my name falsehood, which I did not command. I am the witness”,²⁵³ oracle of YHWH.

The problem with the unit Jer 23:21–23²⁵⁴ is that the Greek version does not present the Hebrew *הנבאים לכם בשמי שקר*, “who prophesy to you in my name falsehood” (Jer 29:21aβ), so there is a strong possibility that this sentence represents a later addition.²⁵⁵ Thus, the Greek version did not explicitly identify Ahab and Zedekiah as prophets (נבאים) or as men who were entitled to prophesy (נבא). A closer investigation of the charges aimed at these two figures seems to support the interpretation that the status of Ahab and Zedekiah as prophets of falsehood is retrospective.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ G only presents the names of Ahab and Zedekiah, not those of their fathers; οὕτως εἶπεν κύριος ἐπὶ Ἀχάβ καὶ ἐπὶ Σεδεκίαν, “thus spoke the Lord of Ahab and Zedekiah”.

²⁵² The MT *הנבאים לכם בשמי שקר*, “who prophesy to you in my name falsehood” is not represented in G; see *comment* below.

²⁵³ The MT reads *ואנכי היודע ועד באם־יהוה*, “I am the one who knows and the witness”. Nonetheless, the Hebrew *היודע* is missing in G and was probably inserted in MT for dittography, hence, it should be deleted; see Janzen, *Studies*, 22; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 555; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 134.

²⁵⁴ It is debated whether Jer 29:15 should be considered as part of the unit Jer 29:21–23. Some commentators have considered that Jer 29:16–20 have been inserted within an original layer Jer 29:15, 21–23, and hence have proposed to restore v.15 right after v.20. This solution appears to have been adapted already in the Lucianic recension; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 46; Janzen, *Studies*, 118 and Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 135. Similarly, Bright objects that also v.20 would represent an addition, which was meant to restore the connection between vv.15 and 21 that was broken up by the insertion of vv.16–19; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 208. Others instead have considered that v.15 could represent the introduction to the first mention of prophets, in Jer 29:8–9; see Thiel, *Redaktion* 26–45, 14, followed by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 559. Finally, McKane suggests placing v.15 right after the pericope against the prophets Jer 29:8–9; see McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, cxxxix. However, the text of Jer 29 is overall too convoluted and fragmentary to allow any such assumptions. It seems safer to leave this verse aside, as its connection with the layer Jer 29:21–23 are doubtful.

²⁵⁵ As maintained by Janzen, *Studies*, 49; McKane, *Jeremiah* vol.2, 730; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 134; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 328.

²⁵⁶ It should be considered that the Greek text may hint at some sort of oracular activity on the behalf of Ahab and Zedekiah in its rendition of MT Jer 29:23b, although this element should be carefully weighed. The text of G reads, καὶ λόγον ἐχηρημάτισαν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ὃν οὐ συνέταξα αὐτοῖς, “and a speech they reported in my name, which I did not command them”. The verb used here, *χηρηματίζω*, generally points to giving speeches or responses, but when deities are involved, oracular responses are likely to be assumed. Nonetheless, this verb does never represent a translation of the Hebrew *נבא* (the term used is *דבר*, and not *נבא*, in MT Jer 29:23, *ידברו*).

It is said, in Jer 29:23, that Ahab and Zedekiah committed an outrageous action, identified in a technical term of legal jargon, נבלה, that generally points to aberrant sexual conduct (e.g. premarital intercourse in Deut 22:21; the rape of Dinah in Gen 34:7; the rape of the Levite's concubine and of his virgin daughter at Gibeah in Judg 19:23–24; the rape of Tamar in 2 Sam 13:12).²⁵⁷ The reader's impression that Ahab and Zedekiah had given scandal to the community with unacceptable sexual behaviour by fornicating with married women is reinforced by the pairing of the term נבלה with the term נאף, “adultery”, which in this context ostensibly points to marital infidelity, as the verse explicates (וינאפו את נשי רעיהם), “with the wives of their neighbours”, in Jer 29:23a).²⁵⁸ Furthermore, it should be considered that all the prophets of Jerusalem have been accused of adultery in Jer 23:14, although it is not clear if, in that instance, the charge entailed apostasy, performing forbidden sexual rituals or general sexual misconduct. The connection with Jer 23:14 makes the adultery of Ahab and Zedekiah suspicious, since individual prophets are never accused of adultery, and so such charges are rendered stereotypical.²⁵⁹ Thus, as regards Jer 29:21–23, it seems safer to give priority to the Greek version, which does not present the two accusations of שקר against Ahab and Zedekiah and weakens the conclusion that these two figures were among those prophets who prophesied falsehood in Babylon.

דבר בשמי שקר, “they spoke in my name falsehood”). Similarly, the term שקר in Jer 29:23 is not represented in G, whose translators are generally quite liberal with the use of the word ψευδῆ, “lie”, especially when it comes to the prophets in the cycle 27–29 (G Jer 34–36). This is not to say that Ahab and Zedekiah did not pronounce an oracular response or speak without YHWH's command, but that the tradition, both in the Greek and the Hebrew (excluding Jer 29:21aβ) did not register them among those prophets who prophesied falsehood (using the usual terms נבא and שקר).

²⁵⁷ Carroll, Holladay and Scalise take the term נבלה to refer to all actions that undermine order in the community; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 554; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 144; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 78.

²⁵⁸ To be more precise, the possibility that the verb נאף points to some sort of apostasy or religious pollution might still be sustained, as the text specifies that Ahab and Zedekiah did what they did with the wives of their neighbours, who may be their fellow Israelites as well as the “unclean” Babylonian women that lived close to them. The term רע, “neighbour”, is fluid in the Hebrew Bible, as it refers to Israelites and non-Israelites depending on the context (it clearly refers to non-Israelites in Gen 11:3; 38:12; Ex 2:13; 20:16; Deut 5:17). For further details, see Friedman's analysis of this term in the sentence אהבת לרעך כמוך, “Love your neighbour like yourself”, in Lev 19; in Richard E. Friedman, “Love Your Neighbor: Only the Israelites or Everyone?”, in *Biblical Archaeology Review* (2014), 48–52. It has been suggested that Ahab and Zedekiah were punished because they refused to take Israelite wives to procreate with them (as prescribed in Jer 29:6), preferring instead to defile themselves with foreign women; see Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel: Exkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908), 316. Nonetheless, such a solution seems to read too much into the text, although we cannot exclude that MT is referring to something more than conjugal infidelity.

²⁵⁹ The term נאף recurs 31 times in the Hebrew Bible, 8 times in the book of Jeremiah. It refers explicitly to prophets only in Jer 23:14 and 29:23; in the other 6 occurrences, the term refers to Israel (Jer 3:8–9) and the Israelites as a group (Jer 5:7; 7:9; 9:2; 23:10). In one case only, this word refers unmistakably to apostasy (Jer 3:8–9), while in all the other occurrences it appears impossible to draw a neat line between sexual and religious promiscuity.

Nevertheless, before concluding, a further consideration must be made as regards Jer 29:23, namely that this verse may represent a later development of Ahab and Zedekiah's fate. There is an evident *non-sequitur* between the faults of the prophet, which even appear *after* the verdict, and the hyperbolic circumstances of the carrying out of their sentence. The direct involvement of YHWH and Nebuchadnezzar in what appears to be a minor matter of criminal justice is inconsistent,²⁶⁰ and might be due to the later literary growth of the episode.²⁶¹ Apparently, at least two evident supplementations to the redaction of Ahab and Zedekiah's story can be highlighted. The core of the episode (29:21–22) is quite vague. We do not know who Ahab and Zedekiah were, but perhaps they were some notables among the exiles. What seems clear however is that, at some point, they provoked the anger of their community, or of the Babylonian overlords, and were put to death, although their offence is never specified. A later redactor has implemented this story with Jer 29:23, adding a spicy element that certainly contributed to the prediction that the names of Ahab and Zedekiah would always be remembered very negatively,²⁶² even if it does not fit comfortably with the manner of their execution which was carried out with great pomp and ceremony by Nebuchadnezzar II himself. This first stage of redaction is preserved in the Greek text (G Jer 36:21–22). Finally, a second stage of redaction, which is evident in the Hebrew text but not represented in the Greek, clearly treats Ahab and Zedekiah just like any other sworn enemies of Jeremiah, and thus has accused them of being among those prophets who spread falsehood (evidence of this is provided by the

²⁶⁰ It is true that adultery is punishable by death (Lev 18:29; Deut 22:22) and overall represents an offence before YHWH's eyes (Gen 37:9) but it is sometimes treated lightly elsewhere (Job 24:15; Prov 6:32; 30:20) or not punished by death of the culprit (e.g. the episode of David and Uriah's wife, in which David's sin seems to be expiated by the death of his illegitimate son; 2 Sam 12:13–14). In contrast, rape is a crime that usually goes unnoticed in the culture which is described in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 19:8; Judg 19:24–25; 2 Sam 13:11–16), and the victim is usually obliged to marry the rapist as reparation (Deut 22:28–29). Why, for similar crimes, Ahab and Zedekiah should become the object of a sempiternal curse among the people remains a mystery, as is their execution by the regent of the Babylonian empire.

²⁶¹ There have been unsatisfactory attempts to solve the imbalance between the crime and the punishment. Holladay considers that Ahab and Zedekiah are guilty of having antagonized the Babylonian governors, just like Hananiah. For this reason, they were executed by Nebuchadnezzar, who acted to stop a revolt against him; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 143. Similarly, also Jones, *Jeremiah*, 368. Carroll instead takes the mention of adultery to be a literary contribution to the denigration of Ahab and Zedekiah, which is sound; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 560. Likewise, Scalise states that the role of Nebuchadnezzar in the cycle Jer 27–29 is that of being servant of YHWH, and it is not surprising that the author has chosen him to execute Ahab and Zedekiah for having offended YHWH's dignity; see Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 78.

²⁶² This episode has truly unleashed the imagination of Talmudic redactors, as Holladay (citing Rashi) recalls. In the *Sanhedrin* (93a), Ahab and Zedekiah are said to have tried to rape Nebuchadnezzar's daughter. When they are captured, they appeal to the king and say that YHWH commanded them to do so; fortunately, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the protagonists of the book of Daniel (Dan 1:6–7), manage to uncover their lies and save the day; see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 144.

insertion of Jer 29:21a^β, and of the term שָׁקֵר in 29:23). An obvious conclusion is that this latest element became part of the chapter under the influence of Jer 27–28.

4.1.3.3 Was Shemaiah a prophet of falsehood? (Jer 29:30–32)

30 Then the word of YHWH came to Jeremiah, 31 “Send to all the ones in captivity saying, ‘Thus says YHWH to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, since Shemaiah prophesied to you, but I did not send him, he caused you to believe in falsehood. 32 Therefore thus says YHWH; I am punishing Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed. There will be no one from its offspring dwelling in the midst of this people and he will not see the good that I will do to my people, oracle of YHWH, because he taught rebellion against YHWH’”.

Jeremiah’s words against Shemaiah the Nehelamite close Jer 29 and are a reply to letters of complaint that Shemaiah sent to the chief of the temple in Jerusalem, Zephaniah (Jer 29:25). Shemaiah’s grievances relate to the fact that Zephaniah was supposed to put into stocks all the maniacs that acted as prophets (לְכָל־אִישׁ מִשְׁגֵּעַ וּמִתְנַבֵּא, “every madman who prophesy”, in Jer 29:26);²⁶³ however, he ignored Jeremiah and let him prophesy in the temple (Jer 29:27). Apparently, Jeremiah needed to be stopped because he announced to the exiles that their stay in Babylon would be long (Jer 29:28, clearly based on Jer 29:5–7). When he comes to know Shemaiah’s words (Jer 29:29–30), Jeremiah accuses Shemaiah of false prophesying and rebellion against YHWH (Jer 29:31–32).

However, Jer 29:30–32 is a secondary addition, which presents the motif of blaming the prophets just like Jer 27–28. These verses have been added as a reply to Shemaiah’s words in Jer 29:24–29 and represent a new word that comes from YHWH.²⁶⁴ As was the case for Ahab

²⁶³ The term מִשְׁגֵּעַ literally means “madman” and is not unusual as a derogatory term which refers to prophetic gifts (e.g. 2 Kgs 9:11, Hos 9:7). Holladay compares it to a cognate Arabic root that refers to bird noises, so he understands the Hebrew to imply some sort of babbling while prophesying. Moreover, both Holladay and Allen take the *hitpaʿel* stem of נָבֵא in Jer 29:6 to refer to a form of illegitimate divination; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 147 and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 167, 323. McKane instead argues that Zephaniah is required to act against all those who turn prophesying into madness; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 727. Finally, Carroll argues that מִשְׁגֵּעַ is a synonym of “prophet”, which is used to refer to those who fall into divine frenzy; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 564. It is unclear if Zephaniah was supposed to act against a specific class of prophets (as in, those who resort to ecstasy or divinatory trance), or all of them, because they all are “madmen”. Since in his prophetic career Jeremiah happens to experience some ecstatic visions (Jer 1:10–12; 23:9; 24:1–3), both solutions are equally possible.

²⁶⁴ Already Duhm, albeit he takes most of Jer 29 to be a letter redacted by Baruch, accepts that Jer 29:30–32 is a later insertion; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 236. Thiel ascribes to Deuteronomistic redactors most of the verses that revolve around “false” prophecy, so also Jer 29:30–32; see Thiel, *Redaktion* 26–45, 13. Similarly, Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26–52*, 48 and McKane (who however does not argue for a Deuteronomistic editor), *Jeremiah vol.2*, 741.

and Zedekiah, Shemaiah is not identified as a prophet in the previous unit, namely Jer 29:24–29. This character is never to be encountered again in the book of Jeremiah, so there is no other evidence of a tradition about “Shemaiah the prophet”. The priest Zephaniah, who acted as chief of the house of YHWH, on the other hand, appears also in Jer 21:1 and 37:3 and acts as a messenger that King Zedekiah sends to intercede with Jeremiah, so it is not surprising that he read Shemaiah’s letter to Jeremiah (Jer 29:29).²⁶⁵ Once again, not only is the accusation of falsehood (let alone “false prophesying”) aimed at Shemaiah stereotypical, but it also reads absolutely ill-foundedly. In fact, Shemaiah reports *verbatim* a message of Jeremiah to the exiles (the text of Jer 29:28 is evidently based on 29:5), so he is clearly not lying to anyone. The fact that he is accused of prophesying falsehood is undoubtedly the work of the redactor of this last excerpt, who was most probably responsible for the final form of the whole chapter. In fact, as the evidence suggests, Jer 29 has been systematically edited to include accusations of falsehood aimed at the prophets, probably to assimilate its content with that of the previous chapters, when the editors collated the section Jer 27–29. In conclusion, we are on safe ground when arguing that Shemaiah was not originally a prophet, but since he hoped to see Jeremiah in stocks, he was treated like Jeremiah’s worst enemies and branded by the stereotypical accusation of having prophesied falsehood. He was even accused of having fomented rebellion against YHWH, just like Hananiah (Jer 28:16), who was yet another “false” prophet who inconveniently spoke the truth.

4.2 The King of Babylon will not attack you (Jer 37:17–21)

One last, and short, excerpt about the prophets’ falsehood in the context of the Babylonian invasion is found in Jer 37:17–21. This text (and overall ch. 37) should be read as part of the literary section Jer 37–44, which deals with the last months of Judah before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and with its immediate aftermath, up until most of the population – including Jeremiah – flees to Egypt.²⁶⁶ A short synopsis of the cycle Jer 37–44 sees Jeremiah imprisoned in the

²⁶⁵ Scholars have accepted that the episode contains a certain amount of historicity. In fact, the role of superintendent of the temple happens to have been previously undertaken by another character, Pashhur (Jer 20:1), who did imprison Jeremiah (Jer 20:2). However, once freed, Jeremiah foresees Pashhur’s deportation to Babylon (Jer 20:6). Apparently, Pashhur was deported in 597, and, given the fate of his predecessor, the new chief of the temple Zephaniah knew better than to challenge Jeremiah’s authority; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 550; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 369; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 328. Be that as it may, it seems safer to accept that the acquaintance of Jeremiah and Zephaniah is just part of the portrait of Jeremiah as the spiritual leader of the communities in Jerusalem and Babylon, which is common throughout Jer 27–29; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 566.

²⁶⁶ That chs. 37–44 represent a literary unit is accepted by Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 282; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 447; Gerard L. Keown *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 209; Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37–52: A New Translation with

dungeons for his constant preaching of submission to Babylon (Jer 37–38), and there he stays until the demise of Jerusalem (Jer 39). The prophet, however, manages to survive during the invasion, and he is surprisingly freed from prison thanks to a direct intervention from Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 39:11–12). Then, he joins the deported Judeans in Ramah (Jer 40), where the community endures many vicissitudes, such as the assassination of the new governor appointed by the Babylonians, Gedaliah, and the rebellion of Ishmael, son of Netaniah. Finally, the community leaves Ramah and flees to Egypt under the leadership of Johanan, son of Kareah (Jer 41–43). During all these events, Jeremiah never ceases to proclaim the word of YHWH that no evil will come to the people if they stay in Judah and bow down before the king of Babylon. However, the community continuously disregards his message, and at the end, the prophet is forced to condemn their decision to flee to Egypt (Jer 44).

As regards the dating of Jer 37, scholars have often accepted that there is a great amount of historicity in this chapter and in the collection Jer 37–44, which they commonly ascribe to Baruch, who was an eyewitness to the events.²⁶⁷ The superscription of Jer 37 (Jer 37:1–2) dates the events to the rule of King Zedekiah, and some commentators, who accept this information, have proposed a dating just before the fall of Jerusalem.²⁶⁸ However, there is evidence of redactional work and literary expansion in this section, which seriously challenge any attempt to reconstruct a reliable historical context for these events, whether one aims to place them before or after the fall of Jerusalem.²⁶⁹

Introduction and Commentary (AB 21C; New York: Doubleday, 2007), 50. Others extend the unit to the lament that Jeremiah has dictated to his scribe Baruch, in Jer 45; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 112; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 632; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 670.

²⁶⁷ As Jeremiah's private secretary, Baruch supposedly recorded all the biographical episodes of the life of the prophet before and after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 37–44), and then he added a personal lament in Jer 45; see Duhm, *Jeremia*, xvi; Bright, *Jeremiah*, lxvii; Eissfeldt, *Old Testament*, 354; J. Thompson, *The book of Jeremiah*, 629; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 286. Others dismiss the role of Baruch as the redactor of this section, while they basically accept the historical account given by these chapters; see Mowinckel, *Komposition*, 30; Wanke, *Untersuchungen*, 146; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 943, who however rules out some elements as being historically impossible and which he deems to be the product of a late composition (e.g. Zedekiah's embassy to Jeremiah in Jer 37:3, of which G presents a much shorter text).

²⁶⁸ Bright presumes either winter or spring of 588 for Jer 37. J. Thompson instead argues that the events took place in the spring or early summer of 588, while Holladay dates the composition of Jer 37:1–43:7 in the early 586; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 629; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 223; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 287.

²⁶⁹ Many features in the whole Jer 37–44 exemplify the difficulties in finding accurate details to back up the historicity of the section (besides the double account of Jeremiah's secret meeting with Zedekiah in Jer 37 and 38; see note 272 below). In fact, the chronological order of the events in Jer 37–44 is confused. Jer 37:1–2 departs from the siege of Jerusalem and from the arrival of the Egyptian army, which provides the reason for the embassy that Zedekiah sends to Jeremiah. However, Jer 39:1 starts over with the beginning of the siege, so if anything, it should be placed before Jer 37. Similarly, after the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah is freed from prison, in Jer 39:1–14, and yet we have another account of Jeremiah in the courtyard of the prison, in Jer 39:15–18. More than representing the accurate description of an eyewitness, this cycle shows all the evident

As regards the outline of Jer 37, four literary units are isolated in the text, namely Jer 37:1–2; 3–10; 11–16; 17–21.²⁷⁰ The superscription (vv.1–2) provides the dating of the episode in the period of the reign of King Zedekiah, who was installed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar II. In the second unit (vv.3–10), since the Egyptian army had recently come forth and the Babylonian had temporarily lifted the siege of Jerusalem (Jer 37:5), Zedekiah sent an embassy to Jeremiah to seek his knowledge of the will of YHWH. However, Jeremiah's response was not very encouraging. The Egyptians would soon return to their land, and the Chaldeans would resume the siege and eventually they would conquer the city (Jer 37:7–8). Two consecutive episodes complete the chapter. Firstly, Jeremiah takes advantage of the Babylonians' flight and attempts to leave Jerusalem to go and visit his hometown in the Benjaminite territory (Jer 37:11–16).²⁷¹ However, at the gates, Jeremiah is accused of deserting to the Babylonians, and he is imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, where he stays many days. The imprisonment of Jeremiah provides the opportunity for a secret meeting with King Zedekiah (Jer 37:17–21),²⁷² which represents the last literary unit in the chapter and contains also the accusations aimed at the prophets.

inconsistencies and incongruities that generally come with the editorial assembling and redactional expansion of heterogeneous materials. This is the opinion expressed by Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch*, 48; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 669; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 448.

²⁷⁰ See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 670; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 283. There is disagreement as regards the division of Jer 37, but Carroll's and Holladay's solutions appear to be the most suitable for the outline of this chapter. Others prefer to work with two longer units, vv.1–10 and 11–21; see Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 113; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 629; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 405. Jones instead opts for three literary units, in vv.1–5, 6–16, 17–21; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 455. Finally, Lundbom divides the chapter into four units, vv.1–2, 3–11, 12–16, 17–21; see Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 49.

²⁷¹ Why Jeremiah goes to the territory of Benjamin is not clear. The MT states that, ירמיהו מירושלם ללכת ארץ בנימין, "Jeremiah went from Jerusalem to the territory of Benjamin to get his share of the property among the people there", which seems to recall the same episode of Jer 32, where Jeremiah's concern was to claim his share of an inheritance; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 633; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 287; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26-52*; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 457. As regards this, Bright considers ch. 32 to be misplaced, and emends the order of the chapters by placing Jer 32 after Jer 39; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 232. On the other hand, Carroll deems the content of Jer 32 and 37–39 to represent variations of the same literary tradition, so the MT should not be restored to attain consistency, which is a sound understanding; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 672.

²⁷² The imprisonment of Jeremiah and the subsequent secret meeting with King Zedekiah (Jer 37:17–21) are retold in Jer 38, with some differences, but with the same pattern. Jeremiah has showed support to the Chaldeans (Jer 37:7–10, 13 and Jer 38:2–3), and incurs in the disapproval of the leaders of the community who put him into jail (Jer 37:14 and 38:4–6). After, Zedekiah rescues him and consults him in secret (Jer 37:17 and Jer 38:14, 24). Jeremiah says that Jerusalem will eventually fall, but Zedekiah will not die (Jer 37:17 and Jer 38:17). Finally, Jeremiah begs not to be put in jail again, and the king allows him to stay in the courtyard of the prison (Jer 37:21 and Jer 38:26–28). These analogies have long been noted, but some commentators defend the nature of Jer 37 and 38 as two consecutive episodes which occurred to the prophet with similar circumstances; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 284 and Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 73. Others have supposed that the editors have inserted two parallel accounts of the same episode; see Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 258; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 233 and Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 118. However, it seems safer to conclude that Jer 37:17–21 and Jer 38 are independent narratives arisen from the same tradition about the imprisonment of Jeremiah and his acquaintance with Zedekiah, as is suggested by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 670. In fact, significant differences are

4.2.1 Translation, Critical Notes and Redaction History

17 King Zedekiah sent and fetched him; and the king asked him in secret in his house saying, “Is there a word from YHWH?” And Jeremiah said, “Yes, there is”, then he said, “You shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon”. 18 And Jeremiah said to the king Zedekiah, “How have I offended you, or your servants or this people, that you²⁷³ have put me to jail? 19 Where²⁷⁴ are your prophets, who prophesied to you saying, the king of Babylon will not come upon you and upon this land? 20 Now you shall listen, my lord the king, and accept my supplication before you that you do not cause me to go in the house of Jonathan the scribe, in which I may die.” 21 And the king Zedekiah commanded that they put Jeremiah in the courtyard of the prison and to give him a piece of bread every day, from the street of the bakers, until all the bread finished in the city. Thus, Jeremiah stayed in the courtyard of the prison.

The text of Jer 37:17–21 does not present textual difficulties and many commentators have noticed that, in this unit, the accusations aimed at the prophets are more than likely a secondary addition.²⁷⁵ However, some commentators take the content of v.19 to be part of Jeremiah’s plea. Therefore, they argue that the mention of the prophets is the major complaint of Jeremiah; Jeremiah in fact did nothing to wrong the king, and yet he is in prison while the prophets that have lied to King Zedekiah are probably still free to proclaim their falsehood.²⁷⁶ However, this reading is not the most suitable, because it encounters two problems. Firstly, if Jeremiah here aims to gain the favour of Zedekiah, we must admit that the action of openly exposing the king’s mistakes is quite a foolish move. Secondly, the message of the “false” prophets is inconsistent in this context. It appears surprising that some prophets could still proclaim that Babylon would not attack, because the Babylonians had already looted the city in 597 and were once again threatening the gates of Jerusalem. In a similar way, if the coming forth of the Egyptian army prompted the people and the king to hope again that the king of Babylon would

observed between chs. 37 and 38, which challenge their origin as parallel accounts of the same episode (e.g. Jeremiah is confined to the house of Jonathan the scribe in Jer 37, while in Jer 38, he is put into the cistern of Malkijah; Zedekiah sends for Jeremiah directly and speaks with him in Jer 37, while in Jer 38, the king commands Ebed-Melek the Cushite to fetch the prophet from the cistern, and only then speaks with him).

²⁷³ *Contra* the MT second person pl., בִּינַתְתֶּם, G reads a singular, οὐ δίδως με, so has Zedekiah directly involved in Jeremiah’s imprisonment; likewise, also V, *misisti me*.

²⁷⁴ Reading the *Qere*’ ואיה, “where”, instead of the *K^etib* ואיו, “where is he”.

²⁷⁵ This is the opinion of Duhm, who rightly considers the inconsistency of a reproach to the king mixed with a request of pardon on the behalf of Jeremiah; Duhm, *Jeremia*, 301. Similarly, Thiel takes Jer 37:19 to be an independent Deuteronomistic insertion about “false” prophecy, and his suggestion is followed by McKane; see Thiel, *Redaktion 26-45*, 53; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 940. Likewise, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 678.

²⁷⁶ This is the interpretation of J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 635; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 288; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 63; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 408.

not come (Jer 37:5), why is Zedekiah even asking Jeremiah? He should have known Jeremiah's opinion by then, especially because Jeremiah had already commented on the Babylonians' flight in this chapter (Jer 37:9).²⁷⁷ Some commentators accept Jer 37:19 to be genuine in the context, but it seems safer to argue for its secondary origin, because it clearly disrupts the consistency of Jeremiah's supplication.

4.2.2 Jeremiah and Zedekiah

The faults of the prophets are out of place in Jeremiah's plea and we can assume that the discussion about the role of the prophets during the Babylonian invasion was not part of the subject matter that was discussed by King Zedekiah and Jeremiah in their secret meetings. In fact, in the parallel episode (Jer 38:14–38), Jeremiah does not accuse the prophets, but discusses the fate of Zedekiah and presents his plea for mercy to the king. However, there is, in the book of Jeremiah, one episode where Jeremiah accuses the prophets in the presence of King Zedekiah, namely Jer 27:12–15. This text hardly displays a secret meeting between the king and the prophet (in fact, the second person pl. is used in Jer 27:13), but it is a speech before the entire royal court. It is difficult to establish what may have triggered the insertion of Jer 37:19 in the private colloquium between the king and the prophet; the mention of the servants of the king who were offended by Jeremiah's preaching may represent a solid guess (Jer 37:18a). However, Jer 27:12–15 seems to represent the most plausible model for the insertion of the blaming of the prophets in Jer 37:17–21. It seems plausible to think that a later redactor, who probably preserved a vivid memory of Jeremiah's previous warnings to the king in Jer 27:12–15, has inserted Jeremiah's bitter reproach to Zedekiah's ingenuous attitude towards the prophets in 37:19, which however disrupts the consistency of the plea for mercy in Jer 37:18, 20. Therefore, in all probability, the insertion of v.19 is the scornful addition of an editor who wanted to nail the king down to his responsibilities towards Jeremiah, an element that evidently deviates from the depiction of the privileged relationship that the king and the prophet have throughout chs. 37–39, where they are always surprisingly close to each other.

²⁷⁷ As considered by McKane, *Jeremiah vol.2*, 939. Likewise, Carroll points out that Zedekiah seems to have no recollection of what happened before (Jer 37:7–10, but also the previous encounter with Jeremiah in 27:12–15); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 677.

4.3 The Prophets and the King of Babylon – Observations

Evident similarities in vocabulary and themes connect the faults of the prophets in Jer 27–29 and Jer 37:19 to the *leitmotif* of promising false peace (e.g. the use of the verb נבא with the term שקר in Jer 14:14; 23:14; 27:10, 14–16; 28:15; 29:9, 23, 31; and YHWH’s disavowal of the prophets, since he did not send them, in Jer 14:14–15; 23:21; 27:15; 28:15; 29:9, 31). However, there are peculiar changes to this motif. The promises of peace, which were the only message spoken by the prophets and which served as the main connective between the earlier excerpts (Jer 6:14; 14:13; 23:17) do not recur in the later Jer 27–29, where they are replaced by different prophetic words (such as, rebellion against Babylon; the return of the temple furnishings; a short exile). Moreover, the redactional analyses have pointed out that each passage that accuses the prophets after the fashion of the paradigm highlighted in Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16 belongs to a set of redactional interventions which were aimed to present Jer 27–29 as a uniform literary section. Likewise, the mention of the prophets in Jer 37:19 is another editorial addition.

The section Jer 27–29, in its final form, clearly takes an interest in prophets and prophecy, but does so mainly to emphasize a later portrait of Jeremiah in the book. In these chapters, Jeremiah (constantly called “the prophet”) represents the embodiment of YHWH’s word and proves to be the most influential political and spiritual leader in the community. In this representation, anyone who dares to oppose him is accused of false prophesying, even though traces of editorial activity show that the characters involved were not even originally נבאים, “prophets” (Jer 29:21–23, 30–32). In this cycle, we have proof that the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets is indeed artificial and stereotypical and belongs to a literary *topos* which is meant to discredit all the opponents of the message that the redactors of the book put in the mouth of “Jeremiah the prophet”. Moreover, the accusations against the prophets have been intertwined with another ideological strand, which accepts the exile to belong to YHWH’s plan for the people of Judah. Therefore, all the other characters who promoted different messages have been treated as prophets of falsehood.

5. Pashhur Among the Prophets (Jer 19:14–20:6)

This text (Jer 19:14–20:6) appears to be deeply rooted in many of the features that we have highlighted so far, such as the emphasis on the spiritual and political authority of Jeremiah, the context of the Babylonian invasion and the motif of prophesying falsehood. In this episode, Pashhur, who is the chief of the temple, after he heard Jeremiah prophesying doom to Jerusalem, resolves to act against him and has him beaten up and put in stocks. Once freed, Jeremiah foretells that Pashhur will be deported to Babylon, because he has prophesied falsehood. However, just like Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah, Pashhur is never said to be a prophet, nor does he appear to be concerned with the fate of Judah. In this episode, Pashhur does not pronounce a single word.

As regards the dating, no temporal indications are given but since Jeremiah threatens Pashhur with deportation to Babylon, scholars generally date this episode to the rule of King Jehoiakim and prior to the first siege of Jerusalem.²⁷⁸ Moreover, since another chief of the temple, Zephaniah, is mentioned in Shemaiah's letter (Jer 29:24–29), commentators argue that Pashhur was probably among the deportees of 597.²⁷⁹ However, the many similarities between this text and the collection Jer 27–29, especially as regards the depiction of the prophet Jeremiah, seem to point to a much later dating of composition for this episode.

As regards its placement in the book, the clash between Pashhur and Jeremiah is framed by the “broken flask” episode, in Jer 19:1–13, and by a first-person lament in Jer 20:7–13. As regards the first, Jeremiah is commanded by YHWH to buy a flask and to gather the elders of the people and the priests; he must then reach the valley of the sons of Hinnom (also known as Tophet) and there he has to condemn the people and priests for they have built altars and made offers to Baal, and even practiced human sacrifices.²⁸⁰ After having prophesied, Jeremiah is

²⁷⁸ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 133; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 167; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 445; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 267. Holladay assumes that this episode has been redacted by Baruch after King Jehoiakim burned the first scroll (Jer 36:26), around 600/601; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 539. Conversely, Jones argues that this episode represents a first reaction of the establishment to Jeremiah, which later forced the prophet into hiding (Jer 36). Therefore, he suggests a dating before the burning of the scroll in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (around 604); see Jones, *Jeremiah*, 268.

²⁷⁹ See Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 167; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 445; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 328.

²⁸⁰ Apparently, the mention of Tophet might not refer to an actual place in the region of Judah but represents a hidden reference to human sacrifices which were perpetuated among the Israelites. The name *Tophet* generally identifies a Phoenician-Punic sanctuary for ritual human sacrifices, and it consisted of a consecrated area where the burnt remains of the sacrifices of infants were buried (for a detailed explanation of its characteristics, see Sandro Filippo Bondi, “Per una riconsiderazione del Tofet”, in *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 2 (1979), 139-50). These practices were common in the Palestinian area but were deplored and abandoned by the Israelites after the

required to break the flask before his audience to signal that YHWH will destroy his nation to punish their idolatry. As regards the personal lament in Jer 20:7–13, this oracle clearly reads as independent text, which is unconnected to the dispute of Jeremiah and Pashhur.²⁸¹

5.1 Translation, Critical Notes, Redaction History

19 14 And Jeremiah came from Tophet, where YHWH had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the court of the house of YHWH and spoke to all the people saying: 15 Thus says YHWH of hosts, the god of Israel: behold, I am bringing²⁸² against this city and all her cities²⁸³ all the evil I have pronounced against her, because they have hardened their necks to avoid listening to my word. 20 1 And Pashhur, son of Immer the priest, who was overseer and chief of the house of YHWH,²⁸⁴ heard Jeremiah prophesying these words. 2 And Pashhur smote the prophet Jeremiah and put him in the stocks²⁸⁵ that were in the gate of Benjamin, which was in the house of YHWH. 3 And on the next day, Pashhur set Jeremiah free from the stocks, and Jeremiah said to him, “YHWH no longer names you Pashhur, but ‘Terror’²⁸⁶ is all around’. 4 Because thus

Yahwistic reformation of the cult that began during the Babylonian exile; see Garbini, *Dio della terra, dio del cielo* (Paideia: Brescia, 2011), 163.

²⁸¹ Jer 20:7–13 represents a self-standing unit, which was inserted here because of the topic of prosecution. Moreover, the same catch-phrase מגור מסביב appears in Jer 20:3 and 20:10, so it connects the poetic lament to the previous prose section; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 134; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 169; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 457; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 397; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 467; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 270.

²⁸² Reading the *Qere* מביא instead of the *Ketib* מבי. The final *aleph* dropped by haplography; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 390; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 264.

²⁸³ The MT reads oddly, since the expression אל-העיר הזאת, “against this city”, clearly refers to Jerusalem, which makes the following, ועל-כל-עריה, “and against all of her [of Jerusalem] cities”, inconsistent. A common understanding implies that the text speaks of the cities of Judah or of the environment around Jerusalem; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 131; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 390; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 447 and Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 541. G reads differently and adds a reference to villages to solve the *impasse*, τὴν πόλιν ταύτην καὶ ἐπὶ πάσας τὰς πόλεις αὐτῆς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κώμας αὐτῆς, “This city and all of her cities and all of her villages”.

²⁸⁴ Pashhur’s titles are difficult to translate, but the versions describe him as being in charge of the maintenance of public order in the temple. McKane considers Pashhur to be head of the temple police (פקיד) but also a high-ranking priestly official (נגיד); see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 460. Conversely, Holladay argues that the words פקיד and נגיד work as a double title; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 542.

²⁸⁵ The meaning of the Hebrew מהפכת is uncertain, and the versions disagree as regards the punishment of Jeremiah. G understands that Jeremiah has been put εἰς τὸν καταπράκτην, “in the dungeon”, and so does Syr; on the other hand, both T and V (*nervum*) point to an instrument of torture or detention. Scholars generally agree that the latter may be a better understanding (see the use of this word in Jer 29:26); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 390; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 460; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 542; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 267. Some accept the possibility of a confined room; see J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 454; Moshe Greenberg, “Stocks”, in IDB 4 (1962), 443.

²⁸⁶ For the Hebrew מגור מסביב, G reads Μέτοικον, “deportee”, but the second part, supposedly κυκλόθεν, “all around”, does not appear. There are two possible explanations for the reading of G. The first one is that the content of Jer 20:4–6 has influenced the translators of G, who decided to make a reference to the exile and not to fear and terror. Therefore, the omission of מסביב is intended to avoid the incompatibility between the expressions, “deportee” and “on every side”; see A. M. Honeyman, “Māgôr Mis-Sābīb and Jeremiah’s Pun”, VT 4, 424. More convincing is to accept that the Greek translators had a Hebrew manuscript which simply did not contain the word מסביב. In G, this expression is always rendered fully, so there is no ground for a deliberate

says YHWH, behold, I will give you as a terror for yourself, and for all your friends. They will fall by the sword of their enemies and your eyes will see it. I will give all Judah in the hand of the king of Babylon and he will lead them into exile in Babylon and will slain them with the sword. 5 And I will give all the riches of this city, and all her gains, and all her precious things, all the treasures of the kings of Judah I will give into the hands of their enemies; and they shall make them a prey and take them and carry them to Babylon. 6 And you, oh Pashhur, and all those who inhabit your house, shall go into captivity, and shall go to Babylon. There you will die and there you will be buried, you and all your friends to whom you prophesied falsehood”.

This text does not present many textual difficulties and there is agreement in scholarship to accept Jer 19:14–20:6 to be an independent literary unit.²⁸⁷ In fact, Jer 19:14 signals the beginning of a new section, which presents Jeremiah has having come back from his duty in Tophet, and so it is unconnected to the “broken flask” oracle.²⁸⁸ It may be considered that the evil that YHWH is about to wreak upon Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah (Jer 19:15) expresses YHWH’s judgement on the sins of the people in the previous section (Jer 19:1–13).²⁸⁹ Moreover, it should be considered that an independent reason for judgement appears in Jer 19:15 (כי הקשו את-ערפם לבלתי שמוע את-דברי), “because they have hardened their necks to avoid listening to my word”), which is not connected to Jer 19:1–13, where the main sins of the people were idolatry and the practicing of foreign cults (Jer 19:4–5, 13). Therefore, the confrontation between Jeremiah and Pashhur does not continue the previous episode but begins a new, independent one.²⁹⁰

However, Jer 19:14–20:6 has developed from a core unit but has also undergone expansion and reworking. The core oracle is found in the direct confrontation between Jeremiah and Pashhur (Jer 20:2–3), which once represented a stand-alone episode. To link this episode to the

deletion. In fact, the expression מגור מסביב appears in Jer 20:10 and it probably triggered the addition of מסביב in Jer 20:3; see Janzen, *Studies*, 73.

²⁸⁷ See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 389; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 449; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 263; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 842; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 277. Only few scholars work with a longer text, as in Jer 19:1–20:6; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 537; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 192.

²⁸⁸ As noted by Carroll, Jeremiah is never shown to have broken the flask, but Jer 19:14 evidently assumes that he did before he returned to Jerusalem; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 391.

²⁸⁹ This opinion is shared by J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 453; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 538; Craigie *et alii*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 265. Similarly, Brueggemann connects the words of Jeremiah in Jer 19:14–15 to the main theme of Jer 19:1–13 and argues that Jeremiah has decided to disobey YHWH’s command, because there is no breaking of the flask, nor travelling with the elders and the priests (Jer 19:1, 10), but only a short judgement oracle in the temple; see Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 170.

²⁹⁰ See Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 226; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 133; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 391; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 466; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 228.

“broken flask” one, Jer 19:14–15 was added.²⁹¹ Jer 19:14–15 reprises the settings of Jer 19:1–13 and depicts Jeremiah as a prophet who comes and goes to deliver YHWH’s words at the deity’s will.²⁹² In fact, Jeremiah’s oracle in the temple courtyard (Jer 19:14–15) provides a reasonable cause for Pashhur’s indignation, which is an element that is missing in Jer 20:2–3. The introduction in Jer 20:1 is yet another secondary addition which works as a linking device, since it reinforces the connection between the core Jer 20:2–3 and Jer 19:14–15. The role of Pashhur as chief of the temple is probably inferred from the settings of Jeremiah’s oracle (Jer 19:14, *בְּחֶצֶר בֵּית יְהוָה*, “in the court of the house of YHWH”). Likewise, the reason for Pashhur’s disappointment in Jer 19:15 is reprised in Jer 20:1, (the expression, *אֵת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה*, “these words”, in Jer 20:1, harkens back to the message previously spoken by Jeremiah).

The latest addition is Jer 20:4–6, which reads as an exegesis of previous features. In its earlier form, the clash with Pashhur in Jer 20:2–3 had in the change of Pashhur’s name its climax. It seems evident that the redactor responsible for Jer 20:4–6 inserted it as an explanation of the new name that Jeremiah had given to Pashhur.²⁹³ Therefore, Jer 20:4–6 departs from the clash with Pashhur but is not connected to the words that caused Jeremiah to be beaten up by him; this unit rather expands on the meaning of *מִגּוֹר מְסִיב*, “terror is all around”,²⁹⁴ and it is a foreshadowing of Pashhur’s fate, in connection with the Babylonian invasion. It is only in this latest development that the accusation aimed at Pashhur for having prophesied falsehood recurs.

²⁹¹ This is the reconstruction proposed by Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 226, and Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 166, which is followed by McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 465. Allen also argues that Jer 19:14–15 stands as a prelude to Jer 20:1–6 and presupposes the fuller redactional form of Jer 19:1–13; see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 229.

²⁹² Carroll compares this depiction of Jeremiah with that of the prophet Elijah, who acts as an itinerant prophet who goes wherever YHWH commands (1 Kgs 17:1–10; 18:1–19); see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 392.

²⁹³ See Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 227; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 462, 466.

²⁹⁴ It has often been argued that the Hebrew *מִגּוֹר מְסִיב* contains some sort of pun on the name Pashhur, and many commentators have proposed comparisons and antitheses with other words in Hebrew or with cognate terms from other Semitic languages. For a summary of these attempts see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 461–64; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 543–45. However, none of the solutions proposed are convincing and the attempt to establish a literary relationship should be discarded. One of the major difficulties in understanding the change of name comes from the three meanings that the verb *גור* has in Hebrew, as is highlighted by its translation in the versions. In fact, G renames Pashhur as *Μέτοικον*, “deportee”, so it understands the meaning to be *גור*, “sojourn”, and reads *מִגּוֹר* to be a reference to deportation (similarly, Syr). T on the other hand has it as *גור*, “gather against”, and MT and V understand the meaning to be *גור*, “terror”. A sophisticated solution which is aimed to harmonize all the different meanings of *גור* is proposed by Holladay, who argues that in Jer 20:3–6, the text is displaying a word play on all its three senses. Hence, Holladay opts to leave the new name untranslated and takes the verb as *גור* in v.4, “terror”. In v.5, he claims that the focus is on an enemy attack, so the meaning is *גור*, “gather against”. Finally, in v.6, we have the depiction of the exile, so Holladay accepts the same meaning of G and Syr, *גור*. However, Holladay’s explanation does not account for the redaction history of the text and the differences between the versions (especially with G); see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 544.

5.2 Creating a Prophetic Antagonist

Before we analyse Pashhur as a “false” prophet, we have to deal with the depiction of Jeremiah in this episode. Jeremiah is presented as the favorite prophet of YHWH, who is active in the temple of Jerusalem, but is also determined to carry YHWH’s message wherever needed. Because of his determination to stay true to his command, he faces like a proto-martyr the hatred and resentment of the people and of other cultic officials. However, his confidence is never shaken. This depiction is clearly in line with that of Jer 27–29, in which Jeremiah embodies the authority of YHWH and acts as the perfect representation of a prophet. Besides, Pashhur is also vividly depicted in the episode. He is the son of Immer the priest, and acts as the overseer and chief of the house of YHWH. This text displays a detailed characterization of its protagonists and resembles the confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer 28). However, these two episodes differ because in Jer 19:14–20:6 there is no interest in Pashhur’s words. Jer 20:6 is too quick in pointing out that Pashhur “prophesied falsehood”, but then it does not explain how or why.

As we see, the core oracle is about Pashhur who beats up Jeremiah, and therefore some scepticism as regards the role of Pashhur to be a prophet (let alone a “false” prophet) is justified.²⁹⁵ In fact, the mention of Babylon as the invader and as the land of exile belongs to a secondary addition (Jer 20:4–6), and cannot be the the reason why Pashhur punishes Jeremiah. All we know is that Pashhur did not like Jeremiah’s words about the fate of Jerusalem (Jer 19:15), which were indeed very generic and did not imply any sort of dispute as to whether peace was coming to Judah, or wheter Nebuchadnezzar would capture the city at last. The accusation of false prophesying is inappropriate in this context, but it is consistent nonetheless with the pattern of using stereotypical accusations of falsehood aimed at anyone who was impudent enough to disrespect Jeremiah. The redactor who added Jer 20:4–6 had no interest in showing that Pashhur indeed proclaimed falsehood; the fact that he attacked Jeremiah and prevented him from carrying on his duty was more than enough to associate him with the villains *par excellence*, the “false” prophets. Some scholars have interpreted the episode in Jer

²⁹⁵ See Thiel, *Redaktion 1-25*, 227; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 167; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 394; McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 466. Holladay deems “curious” the mention of false prophesying, and instead of considering Pashhur as someone who performs prophetic actions, takes his lies as being connected to his name, which Holladay translates as “fruitful all around”; see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 545. Besides, some commentators do not question his role as a prophet nor his false message; see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 133; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 456; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 229.

19:14–20:6 as a “biographical” account of the life of Jeremiah,²⁹⁶ but in the final form all the *dramatis personae* evidently serve ideological purposes which are pursued with stereotypical elements.

For the final redactor of this text, Jeremiah is the only true prophet of YHWH and the privileged spiritual authority in the community (Jer 27–29); Pashhur may stand for an opposing group (maybe linked to the temple of Jerusalem),²⁹⁷ or a generic rival, who is attacked by reusing formulaic elements in the book. This is a common feature in any ideological conflict, in which the adversaries must be heavily discredited using any means, and whether the accusations are realistic or not is just a secondary element. In the book of Jeremiah, Pashhur is just another character that, like Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah, was never a prophet and more than likely never prophesied, but given his contretemps with Jeremiah, was eventually turned into the perfect counterfoil to the protagonist of the book.

6. Promising Peace and Prophesying Falsehood

Despite being more concerned than any other book with the false promises of peace, the book of Jeremiah does not seem to convey a uniform depiction as regards the blaming of the prophets and the content of their messages. In fact, in the passages which deal with the “foe from the North” (Jer 5:30–31 and 6:13–15), priests and prophets are coupled together, and their charges read rather vaguely, although they clearly address the period around the year 587. Therefore, in Jer 6:13–15, the priests and the prophets have committed falsehood (Jer 6:13), because they have promised peace to a nation which was actually on the verge of disaster (Jer 6:14). The accusation of falsehood is reprised in Jer 5:31, but in this later case, only the prophets appear to be the liars, since they prophesy falsehood to the people. On the other hand, the position of the priests is rather ambiguous, because they appear to be subordinate to the prophets, and therefore may be their unwilling victims. Similar accusations appear also in Jer 14:13–16, which clearly reprises the settings and vocabulary of the previous excerpts, but also

²⁹⁶ See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 133; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 162; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 445; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 539.

²⁹⁷ Thiel and Carroll consider the rhetoric of opposition between city and cult and the antagonism against some public figures in the community to lay behind the final form of this episode; see Thiel *Redaktion 1-25*, 228 and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 394.

add some elements from Deut 18:20–22 to justify the legitimacy of prophecy. The blaming of the prophets (because the priests are no longer considered in Jer 14:13–16)²⁹⁸ points once again to the fall of Jerusalem. The prophets did not help the people, but they spread a false sense of security in the nation; they made a promise of peace (a lasting peace! 14:13), but their words were nothing more than false prophecy and exploitation of the name of YHWH (14:14–15).

In Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 and 23:25–32, despite the presence of the same terminology, the promises of peace belong to a different context. Firstly, there is no mention of a military invasion, and the fall of Jerusalem does not appear to be a concern of these passages. The prophets here are accused because they promise peace and well-being to those that despise YHWH (Jer 23:17), while they should have persuaded them to abandon their evil ways (Jer 23:22). Moreover, they even pretend to know the messages of YHWH, but as a matter of fact they have no clue as to his plans (Jer 23:32). In comparison to the materials from the “foe from the North” cycle, the authors of Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 and 23:25–32 seem to adapt the *leitmotif* of the false promises of peace to a different context, in which the wrongdoings of the prophetic class are inserted into the social environment of Judah. The prophets encourage the wicked and abuse the name of YHWH; these accusations do not necessitate the backdrop of the events of 587 to be understood.

Both the passages from the “foe from the North” cycle (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 14:13–16) and Jer 23:16–17, 21–22; 23:25–32 are not concerned with the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets. The prophets are attacked relentlessly, but they are never compared to a different model of prophet. The “true” prophet Jeremiah never emerges in these passages, because they are anonymous accusations targeted at all the religious and prophetic classes. In a similar way, the delineation of an objective differentiation (whether it is technical, theological or moral) between prophets is never attempted, and only in Jer 14:13–16 is it explained that the prophets’ falsehood may derive from their lack of divine appointment (Deut 18:20–22).

Finally, the cycle Jer 27–29 (and 37:19) intertwines the stereotypical elements of the false promises of peace with other ideas. The accusations aimed at the prophets belong to a late redactional stage that aimed to keep the collection Jer 27–29 together. The context is that of the Babylonian invasion, but in these chapters the depiction of the prophets is much more elaborate, and their message multifaceted. The ideology of the final redactor(s) of the collection

²⁹⁸ An explanation for the redemption of the priestly class may point to the emergency of a new clergy in post-exilic times, who did not want to be associated with the old priests that caused the fall of Jerusalem and thus changed the motif; see Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116. See Section 2.4.2 in this chapter.

seems to work on two complementary levels. Firstly, we have a pro-Babylonian stance, which is clearly observed in the accusations of falsehood aimed at all those who oppose the idea that Nebuchadnezzar is the servant of YHWH. Secondly, since all the other prophets are “false”, the figure of Jeremiah (here called “Jeremiah the prophet”) stands out as the only “true” prophet who is entitled to speak on the behalf of YHWH to all the nations.

This element is so central in the cycle that even characters that were not originally “prophets” have been accused of prophesying falsehood (Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah in Jer 29; and Pashhur in Jer 19:14–20:6). More than in any other passages, in this cycle the nature of prophetic conflicts as literary creations shines through. In the previous excerpts, the blaming of the prophets came from an anonymous voice, who repeated a refrain that the prophetic class was responsible for the catastrophe of 587. In the materials found in Jer 20:1–6; 27–29, Jeremiah appears to be a greatly developed character, and so do his adversaries (Pashhur, Ahab and Zedekiah, Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and especially Hananiah). Jeremiah contrasts the claims of the prophets with his own view as regards the Babylonian invasion and speaks to Judah, to the people in Babylon and to all the neighbouring kingdoms.

In conclusion, the redactional stages of the anonymous anti-prophetic oracles collected in the earlier parts of the book (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 23:16–17, 21–22; 23:25–32) and of the conflict between Jeremiah and the other prophets (Jer 19:14–20:6; 27–29; 37:19) can be delineated. Given its dependency on the “foe from the North”, which is the very core of the book of Jeremiah, the original appearance of the false promises of peace is found in Jer 6:13–15, a text that accuses prophets and priests altogether. The first literary development can be found in Jer 5:30–31, which maintains the accusation of falsehood aimed at the prophets but seems more sympathetic towards the role of the priests. That at some point the accusations against the priests were dropped is proven by yet another stage of literary development, namely Jer 14:13–16. This text presents the same accusations we see in Jer 5:30–31 (prophesying falsehood) and in 6:13–15 (false promises of peace) but here they are aimed only at the prophets, since the priests are not considered at all. The final stage is then found in Jer 27–29, of which also Jer 20:1–6 and 37:19 are examples. In between Jer 14:13–16 and Jer 27–29, we must place Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 and 23:25–32. These passages read like the earlier form of the blaming of the prophets (especially Jer 14:13–16), but they evidently adapt the promises of peace to a new context.

As regards the “false” prophets, in most cases it appears that the accusations are not aimed at a single group of prophets but are attacking all the prophetic class, either because they have

caused the fall of Jerusalem or because they have encouraged the evildoers in the community. As regards prophetic conflicts in Jeremiah, it appears that a conflict between prophets could only be envisaged in Jer 19:14–20:6; 27–29, but from among the adversaries of Jeremiah, only Hananiah was, without doubts, a prophet from the very beginning. However, in the confrontations between Jeremiah and other prophets, the status (or the legitimacy) of prophecy is never questioned, because the battle is purely ideological. Jeremiah is already a “true” prophet and does not have to prove anything to anyone; on the other hand, Ahab, Zedekiah, Shemaiah and Hananiah are “false” by definition, and their presence only serves the purpose of making Jeremiah’s authority shine brighter.

Chapter 3

Promises of Peace in the Book of Ezekiel

1. The “Historical” Ezekiel and the Composition of the Book

The book of Ezekiel, as was the case for Jeremiah, cannot be the product of one single hand and mind, but it represents the product of redactors who were active later than the supposed “times of Ezekiel”. Nonetheless, given the cohesive structure of the book,¹ the quest for the “historical” prophet as (partly) responsible for its composition has endured the test of time more tenaciously than the search for the “historical” Jeremiah. Many scholars would not doubt that Ezekiel himself wrote down most of his oracles, either before or after he delivered them; shortly after his death, his followers presumably collected the materials together and edited them in the book.² This model has been – and to some extent still is – the most popular way to account for both the coherence and structure of the book (which are ascribed to the “historical” prophet), and its literary growth (which, on the other hand, represents the work of the redactors).³ Therefore, many commentators accept Ezekiel’s own contribution to the final form

¹ Most scholars consider this prophetic book to be “structured”, although no real agreement is found as regards the arrangement of its parts. Some commentators work with a tripartite division, thus Ezek 1–24 (about judgement on Israel); Ezek 25–32 (the oracles against foreign nations); Ezek 33–48 (about consolation and hope for Israel; besides, Ezek 40–48 are generally taken as a later appendix to this section); see Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (trans. by David E. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 414; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1, 2*; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (WBC 28; Dallas: Word Books, 1990), xxiv-xxxvi; Pohlmann, *Das Buch Hesekiel (Ezechiel): Kapitel 1-19* (ATD 22/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 18-20; Michael A. Lyons, *An Introduction to the Study of Ezekiel* (Approaches to Biblical Studies Series; London, New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 20. Greenberg ascribes also Ezek 25 to the first section; see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22; New York: Doubleday, 1983), 3.

² This opinion is already found in George A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), xix-xxvii.

³ However, even in earlier times, some scholars have challenged this model. Hölscher’s study, which was published in the 1920s, does not question the existence of a “historical” Ezekiel, but attributes to him only a short series of poetic oracles of doom, while most of the book comes from the work of a redactor of the 5th

of the book, although they may differ about the amount of materials they specifically attribute to him; examples of this approach are the commentaries of John W. Wevers (1969);⁴ Walter Eichrodt (1970);⁵ and in more recent years, Leslie C. Allen (1990).⁶ However, as regards this approach to the book, the most representative and influential model is Walter Zimmerli's two-volume commentary (1979, 1983).⁷ Zimmerli argues that the "historical" Ezekiel mostly transmitted his oracles orally, but a prophetic school also arose around him. Therefore, his disciples are responsible for the transcription, collection and transmission of most of his words.⁸ Moreover, Zimmerli also argues that the transcriptional stage may have initiated with Ezekiel himself, so he places the final form of the book closer to the "times of Ezekiel", namely, in the first half of the sixth century.⁹

Despite the lack of substantial evidence, Zimmerli's hypothesis of a prophetic school which built up around the man Ezekiel has been widely successful and was later adapted and expanded. Another approach that takes the work of the inner circle of Ezekiel's disciples as the basis for the different editorial layers in the book is that of Thomas Krüger's *Geschichtskonzepte im Ezechielbuch* (1989).¹⁰ Like Zimmerli, Krüger accepts that an early edition of the book of Ezekiel comprised a plan to rebuild the Judean society from the Golah community. This core was later expanded with redactional materials in the exilic period, and the book reached its final form only in the third century, thanks to the incorporation of apocalyptic materials.¹¹ Moreover, thanks to a note given by Josephus,¹² Krüger assumes that the "historical" Ezekiel was mostly active in Babylon but was able to send part of his oracles to Jerusalem, where the book was edited and expanded.¹³ Similarly, Daniel I. Block's commentary builds on the hypothesis of a "school of Ezekiel" (1997, 1998).¹⁴ It should be

century, who was versed in the Zadokite priestly tradition; see Gustav Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch: Eine literarkritische Untersuchung* (BZAW 39; Giessen: Töpelmann, 1924). Torrey is even more drastic when he considers the whole book to be a pseudo-epigraphical composition of the Hellenistic period; see Charles C. Torrey, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (Yale Oriental Series 18; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930).

⁴ See John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (NCB; London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969).

⁵ See Walter Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, (trans. by C. Quin; OTL; London: SCM Press, 1970).

⁶ See Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*; and *Ezekiel 20-48* (WBC 29; Dallas: Word Books, 1990).

⁷ For Zimmerli's second volume, see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 25-48* (trans. by Clements; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

⁸ See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 69-70.

⁹ See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 71.

¹⁰ See Thomas Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte im Ezechielbuch* (BZAW 180; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989).

¹¹ See Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte*, 306-94.

¹² *Ant. Jud.*, x.106.

¹³ See Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte*, 396-98.

¹⁴ See Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Erdemans, 1997); and *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Erdemans, 1998).

noted that Block's view, far from being uncritical, offers quite a conservative reading of the book. Block assumes that the disciples of Ezekiel were instructed by the prophet himself, and thus they shared his theological viewpoints. For this reason, he concludes that it is possible to read the book ignoring the chronological and geographical distance between Ezekiel and the later editors, because they shared the same *ethos*.¹⁵

A more critical stance as to the contribution of the "historical" Ezekiel in the book is instead offered by Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, in his two-volume commentary, *Das Buch Hesekiel* (1996, 2001).¹⁶ Pohlmann argues that the core of the book is composed by short poetic lamentations about the two deportations (597 and 587),¹⁷ which are strictly speaking prophetic materials, and are not the original work of the "historical" Ezekiel.¹⁸ He considers that the prophetic outline of the book had already emerged in the early stages of its redaction, which took place in Palestine after 587. After this first stage, other three redactions followed and coalesced into the final form. Firstly, in the fifth century, a redaction which displayed favourable views of the Golah community expanded the early prophetic book.¹⁹ Secondly, in the fourth century, some diaspora-oriented redactions were added to counterbalance this pro-Golah theological layer; finally, the book received its final outline in an apocalyptic redactional layer in the third century.²⁰

Rainer Albertz, in his *Israel in Exile* (2003), disagrees with Pohlmann's late dating of the book of Ezekiel. Against Pohlmann, Albertz objects that the book's interest for the Golah community is irrelevant for an audience of the fourth century, and thus most of its composition should not be dated later than 515.²¹ Albertz argues that the book was not written by Ezekiel,

¹⁵ See Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 23. Block's work acknowledges the redaction activity surrounding Ezekiel but favours a synchronic reading of the book. Greenberg, who wrote the first two volumes of a three-volume commentary for the Anchor Bible series, undertakes a similar approach, but he assumes that almost the entire book belongs to the work of Ezekiel. For Greenberg's second volume, see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997). To justify his position, Greenberg states "[I] find nothing on the book of Ezekiel that necessitates supposing another hand than that of a prophet of the sixth century", in *Ezekiel 1-20*, 134.

¹⁶ For Pohlmann's second volume, see Pohlmann, *Das Buch Hesekiel (Ezechiel): Kapitel 20-48* (ATD 22/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

¹⁷ The core oracles, in Pohlmann's view, can be found in Ezek 19:2-9*; 31:2-6*, 12-13*; 19:10-14*; 15:2-4; see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 36-38, 292-97.

¹⁸ Pohlmann ascribes these core lamentations to the pro-Babylonian aristocrats in Jerusalem, who were influenced by the legacy of the charismatic priest and prophet Ezekiel; see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 247-50.

¹⁹ See Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 27-28.

²⁰ See Pohlman, *Hesekiel 1*, 29-30.

²¹ Albertz argues that the book's acquaintance with many details from 594 to 572 supports the hypothesis of an early 6th century composition; see Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 352.

but most likely by the first and second generations of his disciples.²² At the time of his death (for Albertz, around 570), Ezekiel had maybe already started to conceive a book comprising his messages and visions, but it was only in the following decades that the work was undertaken and completed by his followers.²³

Although they differ as regards the dating of the composition of the book, Pohlmann and Albertz agree that the contribution of the “historical” Ezekiel, if there was any at all, cannot be distinguished in the final form of the book, because it is clearly a product of later times. Moreover, even though Albertz is sceptical about the interest of the book in the Golah community as being a product of post-exilic times, it must be noticed that delicate matters, such as deportation and resettlement, which lead to the even more delicate issue of integration in a new and probably unwelcoming society, could hardly have been addressed, internalized, theologized and then written down in a few decades. Such an interpretation relies too much on the biblical view that the “Babylonian exile” represented a fixed event that affected exclusively the population deported to Babylon from 587 to 539,²⁴ while especially the dynamics of the return must have had quite an impact on that part of the population that stayed in Judah.²⁵

For the object and aim of this study, the notion of the “historical” Ezekiel as “author”²⁶ of the book or parts of it does not represent a fruitful key for investigation. Whether there was a “historical” Ezekiel, his contribution to the book cannot be evaluated or isolated from the words of the redactors.²⁷ In a similar way, the evidence of editorial interventions in the structure of the book questions the assumption that it may be a product of the sixth century only. As regards this, the analysis below will show that the words against the prophets in Ezek 13 reflect a much later context than the exilic one, because they presuppose the land as geographical settings and

²² As regards this, Albertz takes the book of Ezekiel to be an “exilic” book, that grants very limited access to the original message of Ezekiel but addresses the situation around the middle of the 6th century through retrospective reflections as regards the events of 587; see Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 354.

²³ See Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 353.

²⁴ As regards this, Barstad rightly observes that the dates of the exile are nothing but a convention, and so should be terms such as, “exile”, “post-exile”, “return” and “restoration”; see Barstad, *The myth of the empty land: a Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah During the “Exilic” Period* (Symbolae Osloenses. Fasc. supplet 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996), 21. Carroll expands on these conclusions, and states that the concept of the “Babylonian exile”, as a precise duration, only makes sense if the “return” to the land has already been considered; see Carroll, “Exile! What Exile?! Deportations and the Discourse of Diaspora”, in Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive: “The Exile” as History and Ideology* (JSOTSup 278; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 62-79.

²⁵ As regards this, see Section 5 in the current chapter.

²⁶ The expression “author” should be taken in the broadest sense, which refers to an active role of the “historical” Ezekiel, either in oral or written form, in the final book.

²⁷ The objections raised as regards the quest for the “historical” Jeremiah applies to the “historical” Ezekiel as well; see Section 3 in ch. 1; and Section 2.1 in ch. 2.

at least the Persian period as *terminus a quo*. A polemic about the administration of the religious and temporal powers in the land (which may be connected to the clashing of returnees and remnants) represent the reason behind the insertion of the blaming of the prophets in Ezek 13.²⁸

2. The Prophets in the Book of Ezekiel

When it is compared to Jeremiah, the book of Ezekiel devotes less space to prophets and is hardly ever concerned with prophetic conflicts. In the outline of the book, only a brief section (Ezek 12:21–14:11) deals exclusively with the relationship between the prophets and YHWH, the nature of prophetic gifts and the role of the deity in divinatory practices.²⁹ However, allegations against the prophetic class appear also in Ezek 22:28 and are inserted in verses of indictment aimed at the leaders and the people of Judah (Ezek 22:25–31). However, in this passage, the prophets are not said to proclaim peace; in addition, Ezek 22:28, 30 are commonly seen as dependent on Ezek 13:1–16, so there is no need to address them directly.³⁰

On the contrary, in Ezek 13, the prophets are singled out and accused of promising peace to the people. This chapter stands out as the longest text about prophets and prophecy in Ezekiel and offers two separate targets. In Ezek 13:1–16, the prophet of the book is called on to proclaim YHWH's judgement to the נביאי ישראל, “prophets of Israel”, while Ezek 13:17–23 displays accusations aimed at the בנות עמך המתנבאות, “daughters of your people who prophesy”.

²⁸ Pohlmann's general statements that the interest that the book displays for the claims of the Golah community may belong to a much later period than the return to the land in 539 and that large parts of the redaction of the book probably happened in the 5th and 4th centuries seem to be to the point; see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 36-8, 393-97.

²⁹ The presence of this homogenous section is recognized by Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 135; Keith W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (CBC; London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 78; Sha'arei Talmon & Fishbane, “The Structuring of Biblical Boks: Studies in the Book of Ezekiel”, *ASTI* 10 (1976), 138; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 193; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 384; Charles R. Biggs, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Epworth Commentaries; London: Epworth Press, 1996), 39; Clements, *Ezekiel* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1996), 56.

³⁰ See Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 177; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 316; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 469; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-48*, 463; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 727-28. It has been suggested that Ezek 22:28, 30 once composed a unit about the prophets based on Ezek 13 (especially on Ezek 13:5, 7a, 8, 10). The later insertion (or the misplacement) of Ezek 22:29, which instead targets the people, disrupted the unit Ezek 22:28, 30; see Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 201 and *Ezekiel 20-48*, 39. Pohlmann is instead more prone to accept that Ezek 22:23–31 represents a secondary layer of indictment of the entire leadership of the community, which was produced by one hand and based on different materials found in the book (Ezek 7:26ff; 13:1–16; 18:1ff; 19:1–9); see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 2*, 330. Whatever the solution, it seems safe to assume that Ezek 22:28, 30 are dependent on Ezek 13. Further details in Section 3; see especially note 58 below.

However, the analysis will focus only on Ezek 13:1–16, which presents many similarities with the book of Jeremiah about the blaming of the prophetic class, like the disavowal of YHWH, the accusations of lying and the promises of peace. The second half of the chapter (Ezek 13:17–23) will be left aside, because it addresses a different subject, namely the damage that female diviners have caused to the community.³¹ However, Ezek 13:1–16 lacks specific information for dating. The most conservative scholars, who take this text (and the whole book) as a product of the “historical” Ezekiel, have no problem to accept that the prophet of the book would have encountered the opposition of other prophets in Babylon.³² However, it seems safer to acknowledge the presence of literary growth, meaning that not all the literary units reflect the same temporal settings and may belong to a later period than the one of the prophet.³³

3. Ezek 13:1–16: Translation, Critical Notes, Redaction History

1 And the word of YHWH came to me, 2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, prophesy³⁴ and say to them, listen to the word of YHWH. 3 Thus spoke the Lord YHWH, woe to the

³¹ There is agreement in considering these verses to be an independent oracle; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 109; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 169; Carley, *Ezekiel*, 84; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 296; Craigie, *Ezekiel* (Daily Studies Bible; Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1983), 93; Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 197; Block, *Ezekiel* 1-24, 395; Paul M. Joyce, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (LHBOTS 482; London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2008), 121. Many differences appear between the two halves of Ezek 13, because vv.17–21 do not deal with the theme of prophecy, but rather present an oracle of condemnation of mysterious practices of witchcraft. Cooke even argues that the *hitpoel* of the verb נבא in v.17 indicates the contempt of the narrator, who depicts the female diviners as “those who behave like prophets”, and he concludes that these women are merely claiming the status of prophets without deserving it; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 144. However, the *hitpoel* form of נבא may be a link to the figures of the *munabbiātu* mentioned in the Emar texts, who were highly-regarded religious specialists for the care of the dead; if that is correct, the מתנבאות in Ezekiel 13 were only later interpreted as a group of “false” prophetesses; see Jonathan Stökl, “The מתנבאות in Ezekiel 13 reconsidered”, in JBL 132 (2013), 70-71.

³² This position is accepted by Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 161; Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1-20, 245; Craigie, *Ezekiel*, 4, 90; Block, *Ezekiel* 1-24, 395; Ian M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel* (VTS 56; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 91; Clements, *Ezekiel*, 59.

³³ As stated by Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 138; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 105; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 298; Allen, *Ezekiel*, 197; Pohlmann, *Hesekiel* 1, 184.

³⁴ The MT reads differently, namely אל־נביאי ישראל הנבאים, “against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying”. The *niphal* participle is redundant and odd in the absolute form, although it is accepted by some commentators; see Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1-20, 234; Block, *Ezekiel* 1-24, 395; Clements, *Ezekiel*, 57. G reads instead ἀλλὰ προφητεύσεις καὶ ἐρεῖς, “and you shall prophesy and say”, which represents a more fluent solution, and MT should be emended accordingly; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 160; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 105; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 285; Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 188; Duguid, *Leaders*, 92; Pohlmann, *Hesekiel* 1, 184. The coordination of הנבא ואמרת, “prophesy and say”, appears elsewhere in the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 21:14, 33; 30:2; 36:3) and seems to reinforce the validity of this emendation.

prophets who follow their heart without³⁵ having seen.³⁶ 4 Your prophets, oh Israel, have been like jackals among ruins! 5 You have not gone up into the breach,³⁷ nor have you built a fortification around the house of Israel to stand in battle in the day of YHWH. 6 They have seen vacuity and lying divination, those who say, ‘oracle of YHWH’, but YHWH did not send them, and they have hoped to accomplish a word. 7 Have you not seen a vision of vacuity, and a lying divination have you not spoken, saying ‘oracle of YHWH’, but I did not speak?³⁸ 8 Therefore, thus speaks the Lord YHWH, since you have said vacuity and seen lies, here I am against you, oracle of the Lord YHWH. 9 My hand will be upon the prophets³⁹ who see vacuity and who divine lie; they shall not be in the council of my people, and they shall not be written in the register of the house of Israel, and they shall not come to the land of Israel. Thus, you shall know that I am the Lord YHWH. 10 Because and even because they have misled my people saying peace, but there is no peace; when someone builds a party drywall, behold, they plaster it with whitewash.⁴⁰ 11 Say to those

³⁵ Generally, the adverb לבלתי, “without”, is followed by an infinitive form; in this case, the text has the *qal* perfect ראו, “they see”. However, the sense of the sentence is clear; see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 286; Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 189; Duguid, *Leaders*, 92; Block, *Ezekiel* 1-24, 396.

³⁶ In the MT, vv.2–3 read differently. Based on the reading of G, the identification of the prophets (נביאי מלבם, “the prophets from their heart”) has been restored in v.3. Similarly, the adjective הנבילים, “foolish”, which recurs in the MT but not in G, seems to be a misreading of מלבם in v.3 and has been deleted. Likewise, the clause אשר אחרי רוחם, “that are going after their spirit”, is absent in G and probably represents a late exegetical gloss. All these emendations are commonly accepted by scholars; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 138, 142; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 106; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 160; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 285; Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 189. On the other hand, Block holds the unusual constructions of vv.2–3 in the Hebrew text to be oral expressions preserved in the literary tradition; see Block, *Ezekiel* 1-24, 395. Similarly, also Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1-20, 234.

³⁷ The MT here presents a pl. feminine form, פרוצות, but the sing. פרוץ is a masculine noun, whose pl. is commonly found in the masculine form (Amos 4:3). The incorrect pl. feminine suffix seems to point to dittography (consider the juxtaposition of the nexus ותגדורו, “in the breach and you will build”). Hence, a singular form is generally accepted here; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 139; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 160; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 286. Allen argues that a sing. feminine form (פרוצה) became standard in late biblical Hebrew, which may weaken the need for a modification; see Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 189.

³⁸ G does not represent v.7b, which seems to be a later insertion which was meant to create a parallelism with v.6; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 107; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 286; Biggs, *Ezekiel*, 40; Pohlmann, *Hesekiel* 1, 190.

³⁹ The expression that appears in MT היתה ידי אל-הנביאים, “my hand will be upon the prophets”, reads oddly in the context of divine punishment, since in the book of Ezekiel it commonly introduces ecstatic visions (Ezek 1:3; 8:1; 33:22). G reads καὶ ἐκτενῶ τὴν χεῖρά μου ἐπὶ τοὺς προφῆτας, “and I will stretch out my hand against the prophets”, so it presupposes a common expression of judgement in Ezekiel, which is introduced by the Hebrew נטיתי (Ezek 6:14; 14:9, 13; 16:27; 25:7, 13, 16; 35:3). Many commentators follow the reading of G; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 107; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 160; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 286; Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 186; Pohlmann, *Hesekiel* 1, 184. Block, who instead accepts the reading of MT, argues that the statement might be ironic. YHWH now grants to the prophets “that have not seen” some true visions of their own punishment; see Block, *Ezekiel* 1-24, 403. Similarly, Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1-20, 236. Emendations may be needed, but the sense of Ezek 13:9 seems clear.

⁴⁰ G does not present a reference to whitewash, but reads εἰ πεσεῖται, “it will fall”, understanding the Hebrew תפל to be a form of the verb נפל. The MT here employs the word תפל, “insipid, worthless” (found also in Job 6:6; Lam 2:14). A pun with the term טפל, “clay, plaster”, is generally understood, so the text might refer to a kind of plaster that lacks an essential binding ingredient. Many commentators translate it as “whitewash”; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 108; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 160; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 287; Allen, *Ezekiel* 1-19, 203 (who argues for תפל to be a biform of the stem טפל). Greenberg, however, privileges a sense which points to “foolishness”; see Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1-20, 237.

plastering with whitewash that it will fall;⁴¹ there shall be an overflowing rain, and stones of hail⁴² shall fall and a wind of storm shall burst forth. 12 Behold, the wall fell, therefore will it not be asked to you, where is the plaster you have covered it with? 13 Thus spoke the Lord YHWH: I will cause a wind of storm to burst forth in my fury, and an overflowing rain shall come in my anger, and stones of hail in fury for annihilation. 14 I will break down the wall that you covered in plaster, I will tear it down to the ground and its foundations will be exposed. It will fall down, and you will be consumed in its midst.⁴³ Thus you shall know that I am YHWH. 15 I shall bring my fury on the wall and on those who covered it with plaster; as to you, I will say, the wall is no more, nor are those who plastered it. 16 Prophets of Israel prophesying about Jerusalem and seeing vision of peace of it, but there is no peace, oracle of the Lord YHWH.

This text has quite a cohesive structure, which is easily divided into parallel halves (Ezek 13:1–9; 10–16;⁴⁴ however it also presents textual problems and elements of inconsistency, which indicate redactional expansion and literary growth. As regards this, a major problem is the shift in grammatical persons when addressing the prophets. Throughout the oracle, the prophets are referred to both in third person pl. (Ezek 13:2–3, 6, 9–10, 16) and second person pl. (13:5, 7–8, 12–15). No grammatical reason is given for this shift, which clearly disrupts the consistency of the text. In a similar way, the presence of the *hapax* חֵיץ to identify a wall (Ezek 13:10), immediately substituted by another, more common term for the same object (קִיר, “wall”) in the following section (13:12–15) appears to highlight different layers of redaction in

⁴¹ The MT verbal form יפל, “it shall fall”, is grammatically legitimate and preserved by many; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 108; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 238; Duguid, *Leaders*, 93; Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 185; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 397. Nevertheless, G renders only one word here, reading εἰπὸν πρὸς τοὺς ἀλείφοντας Πεσεῖται, “tell those who plaster it, it will fall”, and so does Syr, which raises doubts as to whether their sources presented only the word תפל here. The form יפל has therefore been explained as dittography; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 159; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 287. Another possibility, which is proposed by Brownlee and followed by Allen, is that the insertion of יפל stems from a correction of the perfect נפל, “[the wall] fell”, in v.12, which creates some problems of *consecutio temporum*; it was mistaken as part of v.11, thus it did not correct v.12, but conflated v.11; see William H. Brownlee, “Exorcising the Souls from Ezekiel 13:17–23”, in JBL 69 (1950), 186; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 190. Nonetheless, MT works grammatically and there is no need for a deletion.

⁴² MT reads literally ואתנה אבני אלגביש, “and you, stones of hail”. The direct address to the hail reads oddly, both syntactically (the vocalization of the pl. feminine pronoun in a long form is rare, although not unique, e.g. Ezek 13:20; 34:17) and conceptually (the apostrophe in this context is odd). G reads καὶ δώσω, “and I will send”, and suggests that some error occurred in the transmission of MT. The reshuffling of the vowels of ואתנה into a form of the verb נתן to harmonize it with G has been adopted by some commentators (see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 160), but deleting ואתנה as dittography for אבני seems a safer solution; see Weavers, *Ezekiel*, 109; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 287; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 190.

⁴³ The sentence ונפלה וכליתם בתוכה, “it will fall down, and you will be consumed in its midst”, presents feminine forms and suffixes that have no antecedents nor clear referents, because the subject of the entire verse is the masculine noun קִיר, “wall”. It has been suggested that v.14b represents a later insertion, which compares the fall of the wall with the fall of Jerusalem, hence the feminine forms; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 144; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 108; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 288; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 190.

⁴⁴ As considered by Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 105; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 162, 167; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 291; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 241; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 197.

the chapter. A thorough analysis of these elements is necessary to isolate the core of Ezek 13:1–16 and to trace the editorial developments that contributed to its final form.

The shift in the address to the prophets from a third to a second person represents a major disruption. Some commentators tend to overlook the importance of this shift, within a text that generally has quite a solid literary structure.⁴⁵ However, as the redactional analysis below will suggest, the parallelism that characterizes the structure of the chapter does not appear to be original but is probably due to the final redactor who edited Ezek 13 in its given form. In fact, departing from the change of address to the prophets, a core oracle and its expansions can be isolated. Some commentators have proposed to give priority to the verses that address the prophets in second person pl.,⁴⁶ while others, on the other hand, take as authentic those who present a third person pl.⁴⁷ From a syntactical point of view, it makes more sense to isolate the core oracle in the verses that address the prophets in third person pl., specifically Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a. In fact, this nucleus presents a cohesive woe oracle against the prophets who have seen nothing (vv.1–3), because YHWH has not sent them, so their oracles cannot be fulfilled (v.6). In the final verses (vv.9–11a), the punishment of the prophets is foreseen, for they have promised peace, but there was no peace.

In this core, especially Ezek 13:9 has attracted comment by scholars. Those who are less concerned with historical criticism simply accept the implications of the divine retaliation as a means to prohibit the prophets' registration in the census lists of Israel and their return to the land to be part of the eschatological dimension of the restored Israel.⁴⁸ However, given the

⁴⁵ This is the position of Zimmerli, followed by Allen; however, they both accept the evidence of literary growth in Ezek 13:1–16. Thus, Zimmerli (followed by Greenberg) reconstructs the basic text in vv.3, 5, 7a, 8b, which led to the insertion of the secondary layer vv.10b, 13–14a; see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 290; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 242. Allen, on the other hand, takes a first oracle in vv.2–9, followed by a literary continuation in vv.10–15; see Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 196. Similarly, Eichrodt does not question the cohesiveness of the chapter based on this shift; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 162.

⁴⁶ This is the solution proposed by Cooke, who considers two oracles combined as the basis of Ezek 13:1–16. The first one addresses the prophets in second person pl. and runs in vv.2, 7–8, 10, 12–16. It belongs to the Jewish community in Babylon before the fall of Jerusalem. The second one presents a third person pl. and covers vv.3, 5 (Cooke ascribes priority to the reading of G, which presents a third person pl. in v.5), 6 and 9, which represents a later oracle that presupposes the events of 587; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 138. Similarly, Fohrer gives priority to the second person pl. and considers a core oracle against the prophets of salvation in vv.1–2, 5, 7–8, to which another oracle against the “false” prophets (vv.3–4, 6–9) was later added; see Fohrer, *Hauptprobleme*, 66. Finally, Wevers argues that the original core is found in the verses that present a second person pl., vv.1–3 (Wevers understands the third person in v.3 to be compulsory in the structure of a woe oracle), 5, 7a and 8; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 105.

⁴⁷ This is the understanding of Pohlmann, who isolates the core oracle in vv.1–3, 6, 10–12; see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 184.

⁴⁸ This is the position of Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 166; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 237; Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 204; Block, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 404; Biggs, *Ezekiel*, 40; Clements, *Ezekiel*, 59.

uncertainties when dealing with the “historical” prophet as author of the book, this solution is unconvincing. Others, on the other hand, argue that Ezek 13:9 is a secondary insertion, which is apparently supported by the presence of late terminology (e.g. the term כְּתָב, “register”).⁴⁹ The term כְּתָב is an Aramaized equivalent for the Hebrew סֵפֶר, which became popular in late biblical Hebrew for any type of written document.⁵⁰ However, because of the lack of referents for the dating of this text, the presence of one late word is not sufficient to support the lateness of v.9. Even more so if one considers the internal textual coherence in the core oracle. In fact, Ezek 13:9 displays the punishment of the prophets, which is followed by the explanation of their faults (Ezek 13:10–11a). The expression יֵעַן וְיֵעַן, “because and even because” (Ezek 13:10), does not seem to introduce a new oracle,⁵¹ but rather harkens back to what precedes.⁵² Moreover, it should also be noticed that v.10 mainly focuses on the vain words of the prophets, which is the topic of Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9,⁵³ and thus it seems safe to isolate Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a as the original nucleus of the chapter.

The core oracle ends with a comparison between the actions of the prophets (they promise peace when there is no peace) to the plastering of a crumbling drywall, which is not destined to last. However, there appears to be a fundamental problem in this interpretation of the imagery of plastering the wall. Scholarship has often put much emphasis on the nature of the plaster, rather than on the action of plastering *per se*, which seems to be the actual focus of vv.10–11a.⁵⁴ It seems that the the metaphor revolves around the concept of vacuity, rather than the idea of reliability (in its only two other occurrences, in Job 6:6 and Lam 2:14, the term תִּפֹּל

⁴⁹ See Carley, *Ezekiel*, 80; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 293; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 107 and Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 184.

⁵⁰ See Mark F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel* (JSOTSup 90; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 140. In the Hebrew Bible, this term appears only in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther and always refers to official documents. It refers explicitly to genealogical lists for the civil census in Ezra 2:62 and Neh 7:64; see H. Haag, “כְּתָב”, in TDOT 6, 381.

⁵¹ Some commentators argue that Ezek 13:10 opens a new unit; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 167; Carley, *Ezekiel*, 82; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 107; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 290; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 202; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 405.

⁵² The expression יֵעַן וְיֵעַן in v.10 is not very common in the Hebrew Bible, because it appears only here, in Lev 26:43 and finally in Ezek 36:3. Talmon and Fishbane (followed by Greenberg) argue that the expression always harks back to and continues what precedes; see Talmon and Fishbane, “Studies in the Book of Ezekiel”, 133; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 241. Allen, on the contrary, argues that, in Ezek 36:3, the expression is an initial clause which introduces divine judgement, and this should be the case also in Ezek 13:10; see Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 189. Nonetheless, the connection between Ezek 13:9 and v.10 works grammatically (*pace* Allen) and is supported by the context, in which the punishment of v.9 is connected to the faults that follow in v.10.

⁵³ This is a remark made by Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 189, while Greenberg acknowledges an abrupt shift in theme in the middle of v.10; see Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1*, 241.

⁵⁴ As regards this, Cooke argues that the prophets are using plaster to give the appearance of a solid construction to a poorly built wall; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 141. Likewise, Weavers, *Ezekiel*, 108; Carley, *Ezekiel*, 83; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 295; Craigie, *Ezekiel*, 91; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 238; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 408; Biggs, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 40; Joyce, *Ezekiel*, 121.

points to vacuity and nonsense, and not to plaster).⁵⁵ The interpretations that, on the other hand, focus on the weakness of the plaster seem essentially over-interpretations, which probably have arisen because of the secondary Ezek 13:11b, 13, in which the storm caused by YHWH destroys the wall along with the plaster. However, it should be noted that a crystal-clear reference to “plaster” does not even appear in v.10, because the term תפל may not even stand as a reference to some sort of poor covering.⁵⁶ Plastering a crumbling wall is a foolish action *per se*, because that wall will eventually fall, so the characteristics of the plaster do not seem relevant.

Thus, Ezek 13:12 is better understood to be an explicative gloss, which is meant to explain the wall metaphor displayed in the previous bicolon (Ezek 13:10–11a). It appears that Ezek 13:12 does not add any significant elements to the oracle, but repeats that the wall will fall, and that the plaster will be wasted (as in v.11a). Similarly, the change of terms for “wall” from the rare word חֵיץ in v.10 to the much more common term קיר in vv.12–15 may imply an attempt at clarification by the glossator, who wanted to remove the ambiguity that the rare lexeme bears.⁵⁷ In fact, the ambiguous word תפל in Ezek 13:10 is dropped in v.12 and is replaced by the unequivocal word טִיחַ, “plaster”.⁵⁸ The presence of Ezek 13:12 can be taken as *terminus post quem* for the development of the final unit in the excerpt, namely Ezek 13:13–15. The insertion of Ezek 13:12 preceded the insertion of vv.13–15, because it represents the basis for the shift from the term חֵיץ to קיר (in Ezek 13:14–15), but also because, without v.12, it is not possible

⁵⁵ Only Eichrodt – although he still emphasizes the nature of the wall – rightly considers this aspect; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 168.

⁵⁶ It has been noted that the assimilation between תפל and טפל, the proper term for plaster, is conjectural and suspicious; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 168; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 241.

⁵⁷ Conversely, Pohlmann argues for v.12 to be original in the core; see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 1*, 191. Others instead take both vv.11 and 12 to be later additions in the text; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 107; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 290; Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel* (FOTL 19; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 86; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 203. As regards this, it appears that only v.11b is an expansion. This verse is clearly based on v.13 and was probably added to restore continuity to the depiction of the storm; without v.11b, the wall would collapse (v.12) before the storm (v.13).

⁵⁸ Let us now briefly comment on the literary dependency of Ezek 22:28, 30 on Ezek 13; see Section 2 above. All the elements found in these two verses (Ezek 22:28, 30) are found in the core oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a, and some in its earlier implementations Ezek 13:5, 7a, 8. The prophets are only offering poor plaster (תפל) to the people (Ezek 13:10; 22:28a), by proclaiming false vision and lying divination (Ezek 13:6–9; 22:28b). They were required to defend the city and to stand before YHWH to avoid destruction, but the deity found no one (Ezek 13:5; 22:30). The imagery of “plastering a crumbling wall” is quite literal in Ezek 13:10–11a; the prophets are wasting time and plaster, because the wall will fall eventually. The same imagery in Ezek 22:28 is less “physical”, as it never mentions a wall, but explicitly refers to the lies of the prophets, so it reuses original and secondary materials from Ezek 13. The connection between the terms טוח, “to plaster”, and תפל, which literally means “insipid, worthless”, are not understandable without previous knowledge of Ezek 13:10–11a and the explanation of the metaphor in Ezek 13:12. This appears to imply that the hand which is responsible for Ezek 22:28, 30 (or, for Pohlman, of Ezek 13:23–31; see Pohlmann, *Hesekiel 2*, 330) has already acknowledged the assimilation between תפל and טפל, an element that can come only from the final form of Ezek 13.

to give an effective explanation for vv.11b and 13, which read almost identically and would otherwise be oddly juxtaposed. Furthermore, the closure of v.15 presupposes the rhetorical question in v.12, to which it replies with the inexorable death of the prophets (Ezek 13:15b). Finally, Ezek 13:16 closes the text. This verse reads as a final comment that summarises the content of the first half of the chapter and reprises elements from previous verses: the prophets of Israel (v.2), who have seen a false vision (*passim* in vv.6–9), regarding the possibility of peace for Jerusalem (v.10), oracle of YHWH (v.8).⁵⁹

4. The Prophets of Israel and the Excision from the Community

In the core oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a, two elements deserve closer attention. The first one is represented by the addressing of the prophets in Ezek 13:2, נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, “prophets of Israel”; the second one is the threefold punishment in Ezek 13:9, which represents the pivotal point of the oracle. As regards the expression נְבִיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, it is exclusive to the book of Ezekiel (Ezek 13:2, 16; 38:17). The identification of these “prophets of Israel” is not so obvious. Some commentators understand the prophets of Israel to be those who were prophesying in Babylon at the time of Ezekiel and that opposed his message.⁶⁰ This first interpretation seems to rely on the mention of “false” prophets who were active in Babylon that is found in Jer 29, but, given the fictional framework of Jer 29 and the problems relating to the “historical” Ezekiel, this explanation appears feeble. Moreover, even if one is determined to accept the historicity of Jer 29 and Ezek 13, it would remain inexplicable and very surprising how these “false” prophets could still preach peace and security to a community that was already stricken, enslaved and exiled under the same threat they had prompted the people to ignore.

On the other hand, some have preferred not to mark out any sharp differentiation and have taken the label “prophets of Israel” to include all the prophets in the land and among the exiles.⁶¹ However, this approach presents some flaws. To accept that such denunciations are

⁵⁹ The secondary nature of v.16 is accepted by Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 109; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 296; Pohlmann, *Hesekiel*, 185.

⁶⁰ This is the opinion of Hals, who considers “the colourful vividness of the language” to account for a direct confrontation between Ezekiel and his adversaries; see Hals, *Ezekiel*, 90. Similarly, also Fishbane, “Sin and Judgement in the Prophecies of Ezekiel”, in *Interpretation* 38 (1984), 136; Duguid, *Leaders*, 92.

⁶¹ As regards this, Fisch and Eichrodt consider the reference to Israel to be a synecdoche of the people of YHWH, so the accusations are aimed at all those who prophesied to the Israelites, both in Jerusalem and in Babylon; see

part of a generic blaming of the prophetic class means to overlook the peculiarity of the charges (namely, promising peace, as for Ezek 13:10). In a similar way, some have seen in these verses a conflict between Ezekiel, the “true” prophet, and other “false” prophets,⁶² but Ezek 13:1–16 does not reflect on prophecy, nor does it present a contrast between legitimate or illegitimate prophetic gifts. When it comes to the core oracle (Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a), this text simply attacks a specific group of prophets, who are called the “prophets of Israel”, because they have promised peace. In the book of Jeremiah, similar accusations relate to the Babylonian invasion and to the role that the prophets played in it. In the core of Ezek 13, references to the demise of Jerusalem do not appear; however, this connection is made in one of its earlier expansions (Ezek 13:5). Due to the promises of peace and the evident similarities in vocabulary, it seems safe to accept that the prophets of Israel (whether they represented a specific group of prophets or a synecdoche for all the prophets active in Judah) are those who promised that Jerusalem would not fall, as in Jeremiah.

Much more interesting however is the prophets’ excision from the community in Ezek 13:9, which appears to be the climax of the core oracle. Because of their messages of peace, the prophets will face dramatic social consequences: they will not be in the council of the people (סֹדֵר עַמִּי), nor will they be inserted in the register of the house of Israel (כְּתָב בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל), and finally, they will not return to Israel at all (אֶל־אֶדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָבֹאוּ, “they shall not go to the land of Israel”). These three punishments relate to the civil aspects of life in the land, from which the prophets of Israel will be excluded; since the prophets of Israel have promised peace in circumstances in which peace was not a possibility for the people, their social irresponsibility is punished with social exclusion.

As regards this, the term סֹדֵר has precise connotations both in the secular and theological spheres. In the non-spiritual context, it identifies any group or assembly of people, with group-specific intentions (Gen 49:6; Job 19:19; Jer 6:11; 15:17). In the theological domain, it identifies YHWH’s confidantes (Job 15:8; Ps 89:7) and is employed to refer to the religious-cultic community of Israel.⁶³ This term appears in Jer 23:18, a verse that some commentators understand to promote the view that the “true” prophets are those who have been part of the

Solomon Fisch, *Ezekiel: Hebrew text & English translation, with an introduction and commentary* (Soncino books of the Bible; London: Soncino Press, 1950), 69; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 163. Likewise, Block argues that the term נְבִיא is specific for israelitic prophets, so Ezekiel is referring to prophets of the Israelites, wherever they may be; see Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 399.

⁶² See Biggs, *Ezekiel*, 40; Clements, *Ezekiel*, 59.

⁶³ See F. J. Stendebach, “סֹדֵר”, in TDOT 10, 175; also, Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 166.

“council of YHWH”.⁶⁴ Therefore, similar implications have been suggested as regards Ezek 13:9, by reading it as a reiteration of the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets in Ezekiel.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the connection between Jer 23:18 and Ezek 13:9 (even if one accepts the attendance at the divine council as a sign of “true” prophecy in Jer 23, which is doubtful) seems inconsistent. As regards this interpretation, in the book of Jeremiah the prophets have had false visions because they did not attend YHWH’s council, and as a result, they have uttered falsehood (Jer 23:18, 22). In the book of Ezekiel, the expulsion from the council is the punishment for having spoken falsehood and not the prerogative to speak the truth. It seems safer to take the term סֹד to be a reference to a civil assembly, in which the prophets of Israel will be losing decision-making privileges.⁶⁶ It must be said that a sharp distinction between Israel as a social group and Israel as YHWH’s intimate community (his chosen people) is always difficult to trace, so some overlapping between the two cannot be excluded.⁶⁷ However, a closer look into the other punishments against the prophets of Israel reinforces the interpretation of Ezek 13:9 as relating to the secular domain.

The fact that the names of these prophets will not be written in the register of the house of Israel (כתב בית־ישראל) seems to refer to a very practical matter, rather than a theoretical or an eschatological one. Some scholars have proposed to take the term כתב as a reference to the heavenly book owned by YHWH (e.g. Ex 32:32–33; Ps 69:28; 87:6; 139:16; Dan 12:1).⁶⁸ The prophets are not to be included in this book because they lied to the people. It must be noticed that on the few occasions in which this heavenly book is mentioned, it is referred to with the term סֵפֶר, which weakens the possibility that the כתב of the house of Israel in Ezek 13:9 can be a reference to it. Moreover, the content of this book is quite nebulous, as conflicting information is given to the reader (in some passages it lists individuals, in others it includes entire peoples; it may contain a list of sinners, or it may present a list of righteous people; finally, it may simply

⁶⁴ However, there are problems with this interpretation, as highlighted in Section 3.3 of ch. 2.

⁶⁵ See Krüger, *Geschichtskonzepte*, 459, followed by Allen, *Ezekiel*, 202.

⁶⁶ An understanding of the term סֹד in the social domain is preferred by Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 107; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 237; Duguid, *Leaders*, 100; Block, *Ezekiel 1-24*, 404. Eichrodt also points out the presence of “precise legal terminology” in this pericope, to emphasize the civil context; in Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 166.

⁶⁷ As regards this, both Zimmerli and Stendebach understand the term סֹד in Ezek 13:9 to refer to YHWH’s circle, and conclude that the prophets will be excluded from the inner circle of YHWH’s people; see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 294; Stendebach, “סֹד”, in TDOT 10, 173.

⁶⁸ See Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 140; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 294; Haag, “כתב”, in TDOT 6, 380.

list all the living and the dead).⁶⁹ Given the vagueness of the notion of the book of YHWH, a more convincing solution would be to take the term כתב as a civil census list.⁷⁰

This interpretation is reinforced by the presence of the term כתב in Ezra 2:62=Neh 7:64, where it refers to priestly genealogies. These two parallel passages are concerned with the case of those priests that, once they had come back from the exile, could not find their family records in the temple register, and were therefore rejected from the priesthood and treated as unclean. Since they did not find their names in the list of the temple officials, they lost their status as members of the priestly community. It seems plausible to assume that also Ezek 13:9 may refer to a similar context. This is not to imply that some sort of textual dependency between Ezek 13:9 and Ezra 2:62=Neh 7:64 exists; however, the reference to a register (כתב) which contains names of religious officials is found only in these passages. If anything, a contextual connection appears plausible. Thus, the exclusion from the כתב בית-ישראל may imply the prophets' loss of religious and temporal powers.⁷¹ Given the practicality of the matter, it seems that the prophets of Israel are denied a prominent role in the community in Judah and are not simply negated a place within the intimate communion between YHWH and his chosen people.

Given the first two punishments (exclusion from the council of the people and from the register of the house of Israel), the ban on returning to the land in Ezek 13:9 reads inconsistently. It appears superfluous to deny citizenship in the land to those who are not supposed to dwell there at all. Some commentators have regarded the mention of their return as a reference to the prophets' anticipation of an early return of the entire community from captivity,⁷² but this element is not in the text and seems to be inferred from other passages against the prophets in Babylon (especially from Jer 29:8–9). Others point out that the return to the land pertains to the eschatological domain of the restored Israel,⁷³ which however does

⁶⁹ The notion of “heavenly books” is not much debated in biblical scholarship. A fairly recent study that attempted to fill this gap is Leslie Baynes’ *The Heavenly Book Motif in Judeo-Christian Apocalypses 200 BCE–200 CE* (SJSJ 152; Brill: Leiden, 2012). When addressing Ezek 13:9, Baynes admits that it is not clear whether כתב here represents a heavenly or an earthly book, because YHWH is the speaker. Baynes takes Ex 32:32–33 to be the clearest representation of the “heavenly book” in the Scriptures prior to Daniel, especially because the passage states that the book (which is referred to with the word ספר) belongs to YHWH and lists those loyal to him (Ex 32:33); see Baynes, *Heavenly Book*, 34–35. It seems that some analogies between census records (or genealogies in general) and “heavenly books” can easily be traced, but to be fair, mostly because they both present lists of people.

⁷⁰ See Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 167; Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 237; Allen, *Ezekiel*, 202; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 404.

⁷¹ When he comments on the nature of this register, Eichrodt states that the punishment makes the prophets “outlawed”, and, as such, they are excluded from land-owning policies; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 167. Similarly, Zimmerli assumes that the prophets cannot claim any civil rights in the land of Israel; see Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 295.

⁷² See Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, 202; Block, *Ezekiel 1–24*, 405.

⁷³ See Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 140; Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 167; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 295.

not suit the political dimension which is introduced by the exclusion from the assembly of the people and from the civil census list. Prohibiting citizenship and returning to the land at the same time is problematic.

To solve this impasse, it seems useful to recall here the curse that was cast on Shemaiah the Nehelamite (Jer 29:30–32). Because of his falsehood, he and his offspring would no longer dwell among the people. Shemaiah was the main target, but apparently his descendants also had to serve out the sentence. The emphasis on Shemaiah's offspring in Jer 29 echoes the importance of family records in Ezek 13:9. The prophets of Israel, who have proclaimed a false message of peace, will never go back to the land, which means that their names would not be registered in the house of Israel. Therefore, their descendants would never be able to claim their ancestral rights and will be excluded (just like their fathers) from any form of socio-economic power in the land. To be clear, the word “descendants” implies here anyone who could, for right or wrong, be associated with the prophets of Israel. This topic might seem rather abstract if inserted in the eschatological sphere of the rebuilt Israel. Nonetheless, it raises interesting questions when inserted in the dynamics of the return from deportation that interested Judah in the Persian period. As regards this, an excursus to clarify what expressions such as “exile” and “return” historically meant is necessary.

5. The Land after 587 and the Return(s) from Babylon

The biblical account of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the deportation of the people of Judah is found in 2 Kgs 24–25.⁷⁴ Nebuchadnezzar II besieged Jerusalem for the first time under the rule of King Jeconiah. He conquered the city, looted the treasure of the temple and deported the king, the princes and all the mighty men of Jerusalem, leaving in the land only the poorest members of society (2 Kgs 24:14). Thus, King Jeconiah was replaced by his uncle, Zedekiah. In the eleventh year of his reign (2 Kgs 25:2),⁷⁵ King Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon again,

⁷⁴ This is not the only account, as others are found with minor variations; e.g. 2 Chr 36 and Jer 52. The latter repeats almost *verbatim* 2 Kgs 24:18–25:30; it omits the portion covering the assassination of Gedeliah in 2 Kgs 25:22–26 and presents an additional list of deportees in Jer 52:28–30.

⁷⁵ Scholars have often assumed this date to be either 587 or 586. Each dating has its defenders, and due to the current state of the evidence, it is impossible to solve this matter. For conventional reasons, this study has assumed the year of the fall of Jerusalem to be 587. Further details in Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 13–14.

which led to another siege (2 Kgs 25:1). Once the Babylonians entered in Jerusalem, they burnt the royal palace, destroyed the temple, and took all the population of the city into captivity (2 Kgs 25:9–11). After the year 587, according to the biblical tradition, the land was completely desolated and unoccupied.

We cannot consider the above story as a historical account of the events,⁷⁶ although there are some elements that are confirmed by external evidence, since Akkadian sources record Nebuchadnezzar's military conquest of Palestine,⁷⁷ and archaeological evidence for the Babylonian invasion is found in Judah.⁷⁸ Therefore, a Babylonian invasion did occur roughly in the years in which the biblical account places it. However, there is no evidence that supports the biblical description of the events leading to the invasion and to its aftermath. This consideration leads us to the essential point of this reconstruction, which is the dynamics of deportation and return.

It should be noticed that several different types of deportation after wars were common in the ancient Near East and represented a strategic instrument to force pacification. The *divide et impera* always proved to be an effective strategy for domination. An invading army, in order to gain control over a territory and to destroy the integrity of the indigenous social structure, often resorted to the deportation of the aristocracy, which represented the ruling class.⁷⁹ The Hebrew Bible lists several deportations: allegedly, all the inhabitants of Israel, the northern Kingdom, were taken by the Assyrian ruler Shalmaneser in 722 (2 Kgs 17); Judah suffered the two famous deportations of 597 and 587 (2 Kgs 24:10–17 and 25:1–21); and the entire population of Judah is also said to have left the country to seek refuge in Egypt after the second siege of Jerusalem (Jer 43:5–7). On the one hand, we can trust the biblical text as to the practice of deporting conquered people; on the other, we face the problem of not knowing with any

⁷⁶ A short and yet exhaustive discussion that summarises the biblical depiction of the exile and compares it with a plausible historical reconstruction of this event is found in Grabbe, "The Reality of the Return: The Biblical Picture Versus Historical Reconstruction", in Stökl & Caroline Waerzeggers (eds.), *Exile and Return: The Babylonian Context* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 292–306.

⁷⁷ The chronicle concerning Nebuchadnezzar's years (ABC 5) includes details about his western campaigns and the siege of Jerusalem in 597 (lines 11–14). Currently, there are no data beyond the tenth year of Nebuchadnezzar (595).

⁷⁸ As regards this, Finkelstein and Silberman's evaluation of the archaeological findings related to the history of ancient Israel offers a good assessment of the evidence; see Israel Finkelstein & Neil A. Silberman, *The Bible unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), 301–13.

⁷⁹ This is an important element stressed by T. Thompson, who notices that this process was multilateral and often paired with the transferring of new people to the conquered lands; see Thomas L. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth", in Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive*, 106. As regards the customs of deportation among Babylonians and West Semitic peoples, see Charlie Trimm, *Fighting for the King and the Gods: A Survey of Warfare in the Ancient Near East* (Resources for Biblical Study 88. Atlanta: SBL, 2017), 342–46.

certainty how many deportations might have taken place or the numbers of the deportees.⁸⁰ It seems safe to conclude that a total deportation that left the land completely empty cannot be taken at face value, but is more likely to be the product of the ideology of the redactors.⁸¹ While part of the population was carried to Babylon, Judean society evidently did not disappear, but went on to express its own literary culture, and priests, prophets and scribes were undoubtedly an active part of it.⁸² However, this period was not at all glorified in the subsequent tradition, and the myth of a land completely void of people, leadership and religion simply served to construct most dominant ideology in the Hebrew Bible, namely the return from the exile in Babylon.⁸³

⁸⁰ This point is made by Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 38. Similarly, Carroll rightly notes that the book of Jeremiah tends to confuse and conflate the invasions of 597 and 587; see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 535. In addition, T. Thompson states that massive population transfers relating to Judah occurred even at the hands of the Persians, and later, under the Romans; see T. Thompson, "The Exile in History and Myth", 105. That the figures given in the Bible for the population deported are not to be trusted is signalled by the fact that, for two times (597 and 587) all the people were led into captivity, and yet there were still enough to flee to Egypt (once again, all the remnants) after Gedeliah's death.

⁸¹ Barstad is right when calling the "empty land" a myth, which conflicts with our current knowledge of how ancient societies worked; see Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 18. Barstad took this expression from an article by Carroll that deals with the ideology of the redactors in the "exilic" era; see Carroll, "The Myth of the Empty Land", in David Jobling and Tina Pippin (eds.), *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Semeia 59; Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1992), 79-93. Not dissimilarly from Barstad, also Finkelstein and Silberman agree that after the fall of Jerusalem Judah was not left uninhabited for several decades; see Finkelstein & Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 308. Likewise, Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 120. However, even in recent years, some scholars have attacked this reconstruction, and have accepted the biblical account of a land deprived of settlements up to the Persian period; see Oded Lipschits, "Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.", in Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003) 323-76; and Ephraim Stern, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible II: The Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian Periods [732-332 B.C.E.]* (ABL; New York: Doubleday, 2004).

⁸² See Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 19, 43.

⁸³ It would be long to address here the topic of the "exile" as a metaphor and a literary creation, rather than a historical event. What is essential to our hypothesis, however, is not to minimize the deportation of 587, or the role that the captivity in Babylon had on the development of Yahwism and the Hebrew Bible; as regards this, see Garbini, *Dio della terra, dio del cielo*, 223-72. However, it must be stressed that there were many deportations, and many returns (chronicles relating to other ancient Near Eastern kings, such as Tiglat-Pileser III, Esarhaddon, even Nebuchadnezzar II, claim that also these kings brought people and their gods back to their homelands; see De Hemmer Gudme & Hjelm, *Myths of Exile*, 2). The special significance of the exile in Babylon (intended as a specific time frame between 587 and 539) is part of the ideology of the redactors. In fact, the deportation(s) to Babylon affected only part of the population of Judah, and the return from captivity (which probably did not happen at once) hardly involved all the Israelites that lived in Mesopotamia. Similarly, other communities lived (and kept living) out of the land, in Egypt, for example, and never made it back to Palestine. New identities were created in the diaspora and in Judah; the continuity with a Jerusalem-centred cult is an ideological trait which emerged many years after the Babylonian invasion. It represents an interpretation of the past aimed at building a new identity, independently from whatever the past might have been. A more detailed analysis of these elements and reflections as regards the ideology of the "exile" and its significance are found in Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*; Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive*; Anne Katrine De Hemmer Gudme & Ingrid Hjelm (eds.), *Myths of Exile: History and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (CIS; Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2015).

The Hebrew Bible describes the stay in Babylon as a dark period of slavery and punishment, of which the grim tone of Ps 137 is a perfect example. However, it must be noticed that the people who were living in Babylon probably enjoyed better conditions than those left behind, since the territory of Judah was deeply affected by the ravages of the Babylonian invasion.⁸⁴ In addition, the economic conditions in Mesopotamia improved under the rule of the Persian Cyrus, which evidently benefited also the Israelite community in the East, which was in a more favourable situation than those who stayed in the land.⁸⁵

Judah's strategic position on the border with Egypt prompted the newly installed Persian rulers to establish a loyal elite in the province of Yehud, and Cyrus himself may even have encouraged a return to the land of some of the wealthy Judeans that were staying in Babylon.⁸⁶ These groups of returnees did not represent all the Jewish population in Mesopotamia, because only a minority did go back to Judah.⁸⁷ What the returnees found there was hardly the land that flows with milk and honey; they found instead a poorer society and a hostile social environment.⁸⁸ However, although they were a minority, these returnees had the endorsement of the Persian rulers, an element that granted them a great religious, socio-economic and political status. Over the years, they succeeded in gaining control of the political and religious institutions in the land, and in doing so they projected their own propagandistic views of the period of the exile as a prison and a punishment that they endured in compliance with YHWH's

⁸⁴ For a detailed analysis of the socio-economic assets of the Neo-Babylonian empire, see Mario Liverani, *The Ancient Near East: History, Society and Economy* (trans. by Soraia Tabatabai; London, New York: Routledge, 2014), 545-53. An analysis that focuses mostly on Judah is found in Grabbe, *Judaism*, 16-25, and 116-20. Grabbe also offers an overview of demographics in Judah after the exile in Grabbe, "The Reality of the Return", 293-96.

⁸⁵ See Liverani, *The Ancient Near East*, 561-62. As testimony of this growing welfare for the exiles, Grabbe points to biblical books of the Persian period, such as Esther and Daniel, which vividly depict Jewish aspirations fulfilled in the royal courts of the diaspora communities; see Grabbe, *Judaism*, 121.

⁸⁶ The Hebrew Bible, with a clearly apologetic intent, presents these circumstances as a decree of Cyrus himself. This edict appears thrice in the Bible, with some minor differences (2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 4:6-16). The discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder (a clay cylinder which contains an inscription dated to Cyrus' reign, found in Iraq in 1879) first seemed to confirm the policy of tolerance of the Persian King towards foreign religions; however, this assumption has been questioned. On the one hand, scholars have noted that already the Babylonians applied quite a tolerant policy of religious freedom. On the other, the inscription presents stereotypical elements of Persian propaganda; see George G. Cameron, "Ancient Persia", in Robert C. Denton (ed.), *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East: Lecturers of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Litterateurs at Yale University* (American Oriental Series XXXVIII; New Haven, Baltimore: Yale University Press & J. H. Furst Company, 1983), 77-97; and Amélie Kuhrt, "The Cyrus Cylinder and Achaemenid Imperial Policy", *JSOT* 25 (1983), 83-97.

⁸⁷ It should be remembered that there were probably many migrations from Mesopotamia to Palestine spread over time; since some people stayed and lived in the diaspora forever, the "exile" never truly ended; see Carroll, "Exile! What Exile?", 77; Niels Peter Lemche, "Exile as the Great Divide: Would There Be an 'Ancient Israel' Without an Exile?", in De Hemmer Gudme & Hjelm (eds.), *Myths of Exile*, 22.

⁸⁸ If most of the leaders were deported in 597, a new aristocracy probably emerged from among the landowners that stayed in Palestine. They most probably managed to improve their economic conditions by having access to more resources; see Grabbe, *Judaism*, 121.

will.⁸⁹ There were few returnees at the beginning, but they grew into the strongest political group in the land, and their ideology became the accepted cultural memory of the early Jewish society.⁹⁰ This is simply to present the context of the early Persian period, to which Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a evidently refers to. In Ezek 13:9, the prohibition to dwell in the land suits the “return” context and may even hint at the conflict between the people that stayed in the land with those who came back from Babylon. The Bible often describes this clash as a religious conflict, although it clearly has the flavour of political propaganda.

According to the biblical tradition, when the exilic community left Babylon to go back to the land, they were guided by a political leader, the governor appointed by the Persians, Zerubbabel, and a spiritual one, the High Priest Joshua (Hag 1:12–13).⁹¹ Their main concern was the reconstruction of the temple of Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the Babylonians, in order to re-establish their cult and to give even more prosperity to the land than in the past (Hag 2:9). However, it is safer to assume that, once back, the returnees had to face quite a different reality. The cult was far from disappearing, and both temple and priesthood were active, as a note in the book of Jeremiah attests (Jer 41:5). In fact, it is unlikely that all the economic, cultural and religious activities ceased abruptly after 587, which implies, among other things, that literature was produced in Judah.⁹²

⁸⁹ This historical reconstruction offers a certain support to the conclusions of Garbini regarding the disappearance of the priestly class from the accusations of having promised peace in the book of Jeremiah; see Section 2.4.2 in ch. 2; see Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116. A new clergy, which represented an expression of the interests of the returnees in the Persian period, may have felt the need to change the paradigm seen in Jer 6:13–15 (“from priest to prophet, everyone commits falsehood”) in order to absolve their own class from the accusation of having contributed to the fall of Jerusalem.

⁹⁰ This is the reasonable reconstruction proposed by Grabbe, *Judaism*, 121–28; Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 79–82; Finkelstein & Silberman, *The Bible Unearthed*, 301–13, who however accept one single return from Babylon in 539. That the Bible is not to be considered as a faithful testimony of the history of the Hebrew people nor as the expression of the entirety of the Hebrew culture, but as the point of view of a small minority of individuals, is stated also by Garbini, *Myth and History in the Bible* (JSOTSup 362; trans. by Chiara Peri. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 1–2. In a similar way, though more radically, Lemche argues that the people living outside the land stressed the importance of, if not directly invented, the Babylonian exile to explain why they were not living in the land of their ancestors, and to claim its possession back; see Lemche, “Exile as the Great Divide”, 13–27.

⁹¹ The book of Ezra on the other hand has only one leader for the returnees, the prince (נשיא, in Ezra 1:8) Seshbazzar. He was appointed as the governor of the region by Cyrus and he was the rebuilder of the house of YHWH (Ezra 5:14–16). This tradition clearly conflicts with that of Zerubbabel and Joshua, and thus some have argued that Seshbazzar and Zerubbabel might be the same leader; see Johan Lust, “The Identification of Zerubbabel with Seshbazzar”, ETL 63 (1987), 90–95. Others have argued that the Seshbazzar’s tradition was forgotten due to lack of material in the possession of the editors or due to a deliberate ideological choice that privileged the pairing of secular and spiritual leaders; see S. Japhet, “Seshbazzar and Zerubbabel – Against the Background of the Historical and Religious Tendencies of Ezra–Nehemiah”, ZAW 94 (1982), 66–98. Due to the current state of the evidence, the Seshbazzar problem cannot be solved; see Grabbe, *Judaism*, 76.

⁹² That the Judean environment after the fall of Jerusalem should be granted much more relevance as regards the production of the literature that we find in the Hebrew Bible is argued by Enno Janssen, *Juda in der Exilzeit*

Let us now go back to Ezekiel 13. A more reasonable interpretation of the core oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a (and the earlier additions in vv.5, 7a, 8) points to the exclusion of the prophets of Israel from the religious and political life in the land. The exilic context does not provide a suitable background for such accusations (what was, back then, the house of Israel?), and only the assumption of later settings, to be connected to the implications of citizenship and socio-political power, allow us to interpret this passage without controversial and contradictory arguments such as the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets, or the conflict between the “historical” Ezekiel and other prophets in Babylon. It seems that, in order to present the social exclusion of the prophets of Israel, the redactors drew from stereotypical accusations about the fall of Jerusalem and the last days of Judah. The fact that a mention of a register of temple officials is found in books that are connected to the dynamics of return to the land (Ezra; Nehemiah) and that Ezekiel is the only prophet that the tradition places among the exiles may even point to some polemic between remnants and returnees, although Ezek 13 is too scant to be more precise. What seems clear, however, is that Ezek 13:1–11a presents stereotypical accusations to support quite a practical claim: the prophets of Israel have no place in the community in the land. This concern suits the political climate of the Persian period and the return(s) from Babylon and seems to refer to the administration of the temple and the cult in Yehudit Jerusalem. Nonetheless, it should be considered that such a claim is structured using the same terminology of the “promises of peace” seen in the book of Jeremiah.

6. Similarities between Jeremiah and Ezekiel

The motif of promising peace in Ezek 13:1–16 appears exclusively in the core oracle (vv.1–3, 6, 9–11a) and in its earliest expansions (vv.5, 7a, 8). These verses present striking textual and contextual similarities with the blaming of the prophets seen in the passages from the book of Jeremiah. The most noticeable element of resemblance is the blaming of the prophets for having promised שלום, which appears with the same phrasing in Jer 6:14 and Ezek 13:10 (לאמר שלום, “they say peace, but there is no peace”). Yet another shared element is the

(Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 12-23. More recently, Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 19-20. As regards the connection between cultic environment and production of literature in the ancient Near East, see Grabbe, *Priests–Prophets*, 208-9; similarly, a brief discussion of the role of priests as literati can be found in Ben Zvi, “Prophetic Characters”, 20-24.

prophets' imagination as their only source of divination, found in Ezek 13:3 (וביאי מלבם, "the prophets from their hearts"),⁹³ which recalls the prophets who spoke of the deceit of their hearts in Jeremiah (in the expressions, תרמית לבם, in Jer 14:14, and חזון לבם ידברו, in Jer 23:16). Moreover, in Jeremiah as in Ezekiel, visions and divination appear as the prophets' privileged techniques of foretelling (the terms חזון and קסם appear also in Jer 14:13–16; 23:16–17; 27:9–10; 29:8).⁹⁴ As regards this, in Ezekiel, the prophets are reproached because of the worthlessness of their prophecies, which contain only חזון שוא, "a vision of vacuity" and קסם כזב, "lying divination" (vv.6–9). In Ezek 13, both visions and divination are associated with negative terms, namely שוא, "vacuity", and כזב, "lie", so it seems safe to infer that the *media* of foretelling trusted by these prophets are legitimate *per se*, but since they do not have YHWH as the source of their oracles, they are destined to fail.⁹⁵

Finally, YHWH's rejection of the prophets, in both Ezekiel and Jeremiah, is conveyed through the actions of (not) "sending" (שלח) and (not) "speaking" (דבר). In Jeremiah, the concept that recurs most frequently is that YHWH has not sent the prophets, so that they are not entitled to speak in his name (Jer 14:14–15; 23:21, 32; 27:15; 28:15; 29:9, 31). The fact that YHWH has not spoken to them appears instead only in Jer 14:14; 23:21. In Ezekiel, both instances appear; in fact, YHWH did not send the prophets (יהוה לא שלחם, Ezek 13:6), nor did he speak to them (אני לא דברתי, Ezek 13:7). As was the case for the reference to the "heart/mind", YHWH's disavowal points to the fact that they have never been commissioned to speak in his name, which means that they have never received his message.

It seems that within the core of Ezek 13 the prophets are attacked essentially because YHWH never appointed them to prophesy, an element that is explicit in most of the later passages in Jeremiah (Jer 14:14–15; 23:21; 27:15; 28:15; 29:9). Similarly, the charge of having followed their heart in Ezek 13:3 implies that the prophets have considered their imagination to be a

⁹³ Within the Hebrew Bible, the heart represents the seat of thinking and planning; see Wolff, *The Anthropology of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 53.

⁹⁴ As regards the terms חזון and קסם, and their meaning and implications, see Section 2.4.2 in ch. 2.

⁹⁵ There is general agreement that the main difference between Ezekiel and these prophets is the lack of endorsement of YHWH and not the turning to specific *media* of divination; see Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 162; Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19*, 201; Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel* (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1990), 69; Bruce Vawter & Leslie J. Hoppe, *A New Heart: A commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 83; Biggs, *Ezekiel*, 39; Kathleen M. Rochester, *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (CBET 65; Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 209. Duguid argues that the main difference between Ezekiel and the "prophets of Israel" consists in their abuse of the name of YHWH; the message of peace *per se* does not classify them as "false" prophets, because also Ezekiel utters words of peace (Ezek 34–48). However, here these prophets are misleading the people because peace is not a possibility and they are promoting their claims as if they were "words of YHWH"; see Duguid, *Leaders*, 95.

reliable source of divination, as is explained at the end of Ezek 13:3, ולבתי ראו, “without having seen”.⁹⁶ Furthermore, no evidence is given for the lies of the prophets in Ezek 13, and nothing seems to highlight the role of Ezekiel as a “true” prophet. Just as was the case in the book of Jeremiah (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 23:16–27), the prophets of Israel in Ezek 13 appear to be false by definition.

Besides the recurrence of the same terminology, the context of Ezek 13:1–16 also seems to be the same as that of Jeremiah. In the book of Jeremiah, the prophets’ promise of שלום is commonly employed to imply their misconduct during the Babylonian invasion and/or the fall of Jerusalem. Therefore, in Jeremiah, “peace” represents the prophets’ belief that the enemies will never conquer Judah (e.g. Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16, which both relate to the “foe from the North”). Similarly, also the promises of peace in Ezek 13:10 have been connected to the context of war by the later redactional hand who inserted Ezek 13:5, which refers to warfare. The mention of the מלחמה ביום יהוה, “battle in the day of YHWH”, in Ezek 13:5, clearly refers to ominous events and catastrophes, and reinforces the connection between the promises of peace and the last days of Judah. Many commentators argue that the content of Ezek 13:5 is a reference to the siege of Jerusalem, which seems a solid assumption.⁹⁷ As regards the expression “day of YHWH”, it should be noted that it recurs in different prophetic texts with different characteristics.⁹⁸ In the book of Ezekiel, this expression envisages doom and judgement.⁹⁹ References to a specific day of judgement for foreign nations are common in the book of Ezekiel (e.g. Ezek 21:29, against the Ammonites; 26:28 and 27:27, against Tyre; 32:10, against Egypt). Similarly, a day of YHWH will come also for Judah (Ezek 7:7–12, 19; 24:25–27). It is unclear what the punishment of YHWH might be, but the harsh oppression of a foreign nation is a *topos* in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. the “foe from the North” cycle, in Jer 4:5–6:30). Given the content of Ezek 13:5, it seems that a redactor, who did not overlook the allusion to the false promises of peace and to the last days of Judah, decided to make this allusion clearer,

⁹⁶ This is the interpretation given by most commentators; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 138; Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 106; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 292; Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1–20, 235; Allen, *Ezek* 1–19, 200; Block, *Ezekiel* 1–24, 399.

⁹⁷ Cooke and Block consider Ezek 13:5 as a reference to Jerusalem under the siege in 587; see Cooke, *Ezekiel*, 139 and Block, *Ezekiel* 1–24, 401. Wevers assumes the fall of Jerusalem to be the backdrop for vv.1–3, 5–8; see Wevers, *Ezekiel*, 106. Greenberg notes a post-fall perspective in all the pericope vv.2–9; see Greenberg, *Ezekiel* 1–20, 245. Allen hypothesizes that the siege techniques depicted are typical of Assyrian and Babylonian armies; see Allen, *Ezekiel* 1–19, 201. That Ezek 13:1–16 is a retrospective of the events of 587 is also considered by Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 1, 292; Vawter & Hoppe, *A New Heart*, 82.

⁹⁸ Everson has highlighted how the “day of YHWH” changes according to prophetic books, and represent different contexts and theological interpretations, so it is difficult to consider common characteristics beyond this traditional expression; see Joseph A. Everson, “The Days of YHWH”, in JBL 39 (1974), 329.

⁹⁹ As noted by Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 164 and Block, *Ezekiel* 1–24, 402.

by inserting a verse about the siege of a city to reiterate the concept that the prophets have done nothing to avoid destruction. In conclusion, it appears that the core oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a (plus the early additions of vv.5, 7a, 8) belongs to the same literary strand seen in Jeremiah, which exposes the prophets’ involvement in the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and in the exile in Babylon. It remains to establish from which direction (whether from Jeremiah or Ezekiel) these correspondences originated.

7. Establishing Priority between Jeremiah and Ezekiel

It has been recognised that the oldest appearance of the motif of “promising peace” in the book of Jeremiah is represented by Jer 6:13–15.¹⁰⁰ However, when considering the core oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a, a first observation is that the only feature it has in common with Jer 6:13–15 is the blaming of the prophets for having promised שלום, “peace”, in an almost identical phrasing (Jer 6:14; Ezek 13:10). The only difference is represented by the omission of the double occurrence of the term שלום in Ezek 13:10, but a partially inexact quotation can have multiple explanations and does not undermine the assumption of a direct textual relation.¹⁰¹ Moreover, it should be considered that the oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a shares elements with other passages that are found in the book of Jeremiah (not identically, but the resemblances are striking).

To ascribe priority to one of these books, the reference to “peace” must be taken as the simplest common denominator, working under the assumption that the later redactors have transformed and expanded the simplest occurrence of the motif. An author, when he references a previous text, generally employs terms and motifs from the source materials in a new, creative way, so literary growth accounts for later reinterpretation.¹⁰² Since it shows only the simplest pattern (“the prophets said peace”), it seems safe to assume that the passage Jer 6:13–15 is definitely the oldest occurrence of the motif of promising peace between Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

¹⁰⁰ See Section 6 in ch. 2.

¹⁰¹ As Nogalski rightly considers, texts that are quoted may not read identically because the author is working from memory or is using a source that is no longer available, which in no way disqualifies the literary relation between the original text and the recipient; see Nogalski, “Intertextuality”, 104.

¹⁰² See previous reflections as regards intertextual relations (Section 4.2 in ch. 1). As regards the essential exegetical nature of the redactors’ activity, see Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 8-9; Gibson, *Covenant*, 41.

However, we cannot take Jer 6:13–15 as the only model for Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a; in fact, there are other elements in Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a that appear in later expressions of the motif in Jeremiah and that are not found in Jer 6:13–15. To be more precise, all that is said of the prophets in Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a appears in Jer 14:13–16 and 23:16–22*, so an analysis of the textual relations between Jeremiah and Ezekiel as regards the motif of promising peace cannot ignore these two passages. However, given the development of the motif in the book of Jeremiah, when discussing priority, we can work only with Jer 14:13–16, because even if they present the same features, Jer 23:16–22* is evidently later and is most likely dependent on Jer 14:13–16.¹⁰³

Therefore, the relationship between Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a and the book of Jeremiah denotes two different sets of textual relations. On the one hand, Ezek 13 is clearly a direct quotation from the original mention of the promises of peace in Jer 6:14, *לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם וְאֵין שְׁלוֹם*, “they say peace, but there is no peace” (Ezek 13:10). On the other hand, Jer 14:13–16 and Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a show also general similarities, such as the terms peace, vision, divination, heart and more generally YHWH’s rejection of the prophets. It appears that all these similarities cannot be explained by ascribing priority to Ezekiel over Jer 14:13–16.

In fact, the context of war, which is well rooted and essential in the blaming of the prophets in Jeremiah 6:13–15 and 14:13–16 is secondary in Ezekiel. Ezek 13:5, which connects the false promises of peace to a besieged city, was later added to the core oracle, which never mentioned war. On the other hand, the context of the “foe from the North”, which deals with the Babylonian invasion, is original and has triggered the insertions of the blaming of the prophets for promising peace in Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16.¹⁰⁴ The addition of Ezek 13:5 is evidently meant to increase the similarities with the warfare context that we have seen in Jeremiah. As regards this, besides Ezek 13:5, also Ezek 13:7b reprises elements of Jer 14:13–16. If we consider Ezek 13:6, it only mentions that the deity did not send the prophets; in Jer 14:14, on the other hand, the fact that YHWH did not speak to them recurs, an element which is reprised in the secondary Ezek 13:7b. Such specific interventions militate against the priority of Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a over Jer 14:13–16. It seems more plausible to consider that Ezek 13:5, 7b are redactional additions which were meant to increase the similarities of Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a with one of their two models, namely Jer 14:13–16. The other model is clearly Jer 6:13–15.

¹⁰³ See Section 6 in ch. 2.

¹⁰⁴ See Sections 2.2.1; 2.4.1 in ch. 2.

When priority is ascribed to Jeremiah, the scenario appears simpler. One author, who knew the blaming of the prophets in Jeremiah, composed the oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a to allude to the same motif and he marked his intentions quite explicitly by inserting the direct quotation of Jer 6:14 into Ezek 13:10.¹⁰⁵ Later editors, who evidently understood the reference, have completed the work and reinforced the connection by adding some few missing elements, such as the context of war in Ezek 13:5; and YHWH's rejection in 13:7b. However, new implications were implied when inserting the motif in Ezekiel. In Jer 6:13–15 and 14:13–16, the main point of the accusations aimed at the prophets is to present the religious class as responsible for the fall of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶ In Ezekiel, the allusion to this element is only instrumental to the real aim of the oracle, which is to establish the exclusion of the prophets of Israel from the community (Ezek 13:9). Older accusations found in Jeremiah have been reused in Ezekiel to present a specific punishment of the prophets. It is no coincidence that the core of Ezek 13 did not present references to war; that connection was either implicit by reusing the motif of promising peace or dropped deliberately because deemed not necessary for the new framework in which the blaming of the prophets was inserted.

¹⁰⁵ That the priority between Jer 6:14 and Ezek 13:10 has usually been ascribed to the former is no mystery, but this result has been commonly achieved based on the supposed personal relationship between the “historical” prophets; see the discussion in notes 91–92 in ch. 1. An interesting case that attempted to overturn this paradigm is Leene’s “Blowing the Same Shofar”, in which he investigates textual relations between Jeremiah and Ezekiel and ascribes priority to the latter. As regards Jer 6:14 and Ezek 13:10, Leene reduces the sentence “saying peace, [peace] but there is no peace” to the syntactical clause “they say A, and it is not-A”, and in a comparative analysis he concludes that this pattern is more frequent in Ezekiel (other traces are found in Ezek 13:6–7; 22:28; 28:9). Conversely, Leene claims that the same structure is found only in the passages Jer 6:14=8:11, which present a lexical and thematic connection to Ezek 13. Therefore, Leene concludes that from a rhetorical point of view, the pattern “they say A, and it is not-A” belongs to the style of Ezekiel’s scribal circle, and was only later inserted in Jeremiah; see Hendrik Leene, “Blowing the Same Shofar: An Intertextual Comparison of Representations of the Prophetic Role in Jeremiah and Ezekiel”, in J. C. de Moor (ed.), *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character and Anonymous Artist* (Oudtestamentische studiën 45; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 175–98. Leene’s conclusions, however, seem to rely on quite a few methodological issues. Leene’s understanding of the phrase “they say A, but it is not-A”, appears arbitrary, since not all the examples he gives seem suitable for this pattern (especially Ezek 13:6; 28:9). Likewise, Leene’s opinion that Ezek 13:10 is better integrated in its context than Jer 6:14 overlooks many redactional problems in Ezek 13:1–11a (especially Ezek 13:5, 7b). The real issue however lies at the core of Leene’s method, because the quantitative argument (“more occurrences = original”) is not a reliable criterion to establish priority. Similarly, a hypothesis based on the writing style of a hypothetical scribal circle appears weak, especially since the same criteria are often of little help when working with individual authors. In addition, Leene’s focus on the phrase “they say peace, but there is no peace” reduces the comparative analysis to a single quotation and ignores the other significant allusions that evidently connect Ezek 13 to other passages in Jeremiah, especially Jer 14:13–16.

¹⁰⁶ See Sections 2.2.3; 2.4.2 in ch. 2.

8. Promises of Peace in the Book of Ezekiel – Final Remarks

The promises of peace in the book of Ezekiel present striking similarities with the book of Jeremiah and appear to be an expression of the same literary strand. Just as in the book of Jeremiah, in Ezekiel the blaming of the prophets is connected to the fall of Jerusalem (Ezek 13:5 and Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 27–29), which represents the framework for their utterances of peace (Ezek 13:10 and Jer 6:13; 14:13; 23:17). Their words are the product of false visions and lying divination, and do not follow YHWH's command (Ezek 13:6–8; 22:28 and Jer 14:14–15; 23:21; 27:15; 29:9, 31), so the prophets are only using their imagination (Ezek 13:3 and Jer 14:14; 23:16). Given the stereotypical nature of these charges, the settings that are traditionally considered for Ezek 13:1–16 (namely, the conflict between Ezekiel and the “false” prophets in Babylon or Jerusalem) cannot be upheld. This interpretation seems on one hand too trusting of the traditional authorship of the book; on the other, too dependent on the presence of “false” prophets in Babylon, an element that seems to be inferred only from Jer 29.

The punishment of the prophets displayed in Ezek 13:9 provides interesting elements to explain and support the prophets' exclusion from the community in the land. The idea of negating citizenship to a specific social or religious group (in this case, the prophets of Israel) can be ascribed to the power plays in the religious and political social classes of Jerusalem in the Persian period. The organization of political power is a concern only of people that are dwelling in the land, because it seems anachronistic to assume that members of the diaspora in Babylon could have already imagined a socio-religious order for the community in Palestine (let alone their return), from which they had pre-emptively excluded some prophets. Given some connections to the dynamics of exile and return (e.g. the tradition of Ezekiel as an exilic prophet; the priestly list of returnees in Ezra and Nehemiah), it seems plausible to consider at the foundation of Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a a conflict about the administration of the temple between those who stayed in the land and those who at some point returned from Babylon. The prophets of Israel (whether they were remnants or returnees) were associated by their adversaries to the prophets who caused the fall of Jerusalem in order to support their exclusion from the political and religious organisation of the community.

As regards priority between Jeremiah and Ezekiel in relation to the false promises of peace, quite unsurprising conclusions have been reached, which state once again that the book of Jeremiah is the model for Ezekiel. Nonetheless, such a result has been achieved exclusively by

a textual comparison, and the references to biblical chronology, which too often have been considered a-critically when establishing textual relations between the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, have been avoided. The core oracle Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a is evidently based on two expressions of the motif of promising peace in Jeremiah. The direct quotation in Ezek 13:10 (“peace, but there is no peace”) is borrowed from Jer 6:14, although many other features of the motif (e.g. the heart as the source of prophesying, the practices of vision and divination, YHWH’s rejection) are drawn from Jer 14:13–16. Moreover, the connection with Jer 14 was reinforced with the addition of Ezek 13:7b, a verse that completes YHWH’s repudiation of the prophets and their vain message. In a similar way, the context of war, which is crucial in Jeremiah (e.g. the importance of the “foe from the North” in Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16), has been reinforced with the addition of Ezek 13:5 and the reference to the מלחמה ביום יהוה, “battle in the day of YHWH”.

To conclude, it seems beyond question that the dynamics of prophetic conflict (“true” prophet vs. “false” prophets) do not offer a plausible interpretation of Ezek 13. The blaming of the prophets in this text is too stereotypical to be read as a historical account of the clash of Ezekiel with other diviners. Similarly, the lack of interest in the falsehood of the prophets of Israel and in Ezekiel’s legitimacy as a “true” prophet militates against the understanding of this text as part of a debate about ascertaining the validity of prophetic gifts. The accusations of lying and untrustworthiness in this context are instrumental to support the ideology of the redactors. The goal is to present the exclusion of the prophets of Israel from the community in Judah. Why such a matter at some point became imperative, we do not know; nevertheless, it seems that their association with the liars who promised peace for Jerusalem evidently proved to be a very effective argument.

Chapter 4

Promises of Peace in the Book of Micah

1. Preliminary Remarks on the Composition of the Book of Micah

Historical-critical studies on the formation of the book of Micah date back to the second half of the nineteenth century, and start with Heinrich Ewald's *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes* (1867).¹ Ewald questions the assumption that the entire book (Mic 1:1–7:20) belongs to the work of Micah of Moreshet, a Hebrew prophet who was active in the eighth century BCE. Differences in language, style and background led Ewald to separate the materials in Mic 1–5 (that he believed to be the genuine words of Micah) from Mic 6–7 (editorial addition from a post-exilic prophet).² Julius Wellhausen brings the discussion a step forward in 1878, by arguing that not even Mic 6–7 represents a uniform unit written by a single hand. Wellhausen holds Mic 6:1–7:6 to be a first, self-standing expansion, and 7:7–20 to be a post-exilic psalm inspired by Deutero-Isaiah that was later attached to end the book.³ Later, Bernhard Stade's "Bemerkungen über das Buch Micah" (1881) provides the closure of the circle.⁴ Stade accepts Wellhausen's conclusion as regards the two discrete units which compose Mic 6–7, but also limits Micah's *ipsissima verba* to Mic 1–3, that, he argues, were edited as an independent book and already circulated after the exile.⁵ According to Stade, the messianic elements in Mic 4–5 reflect later times and therefore are an addition to the work of the "historical" Micah.⁶

¹ See Heinrich Ewald, *Die Propheten des Alten Bundes*, vol.1 (2nd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1867).

² See Ewald, *Die Propheten*, 501, 525-27.

³ Wellhausen's argument is presented in Friedrich Bleek *et alii*, (eds.), *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Berlin; G. Reimer, 1878), 425-26.

⁴ See Bernhard Stade, "Bemerkungen über das Buch Micah", ZAW 1 (1881), 161-72.

⁵ See Stade, "Bemerkungen", 162-65.

⁶ See Stade, "Bemerkungen", 167-72. In a second article, Stade offered a response to some criticism received after the publication of his first one; see, Stade, "Weitere Bemerkungen zu Micha 4:5", ZAW 3 (1883), 1-16.

The route initiated by Ewald and expanded by Wellhausen and Stade has been maintained for decades in Micah studies, and scholars simply refined the portion of materials that could stem from the original settings of the eighth century (the core of the book) and delineated new historical contexts for the later additions; clear examples can be found in several commentaries from the second half of the twentieth century. James L. Mays' commentary on Micah (1976)⁷ departs from Stade's division, but provides some new insights. Mays accepts that Mic 1–3 contains genuine materials from the “historical” Micah, but argues that these older oracles were reused during the Neo-Babylonian period, namely before the fall of Jerusalem.⁸ The salvation oracles (Mic 4–5) were probably added around 515 BCE.⁹ In a similar way, Bernard Renaud, in *La Formation du Livre de Michée* (1977),¹⁰ isolates the core of the book in the first three chapters, in which he considers the presence of an exilic Deuteronomistic redaction which focused specifically on doom and justice.¹¹ Renaud ascribes Mic 4–5 to a “Deutero-Micah”, who was mostly concerned with eschatological and messianic themes; chs. 1–3 and 4–5 were collated together only in post-exilic times, and completed with the addition of 6:1–7:7 and 7:8–20.¹² In 1982, in his commentary,¹³ Hans Walter Wolff welcomes the hypothesis of a Deuteronomistic redaction of the core of the book of Micah as was supposed by Renaud, and argues that the oracles of salvation (Mic 4–5) were added in the climate of hope stimulated by the consecration of the second temple, in 515.¹⁴ Then, Mic 6:2–7:7, which presents social criticism developed by members of a prophetic circle inspired by the prophet Micah, was added to this first nucleus of the collection.¹⁵ The latest additions comprise the colophon (Mic 1:1) and the final oracle in Mic 7:8–20.¹⁶ The same structure, with minor variations, is maintained also in William McKane's commentary on Micah (1998).¹⁷

As we can see, scholars agree that the book of Micah was developed in (roughly) three stages. Firstly, we have the original core of the book in Mic 1–3, which comprise exclusively doom oracles. These chapters seem to contain the older materials in the book; some scholars

⁷ See James L. Mays, *Micah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

⁸ See Mays, *Micah*, 23–25.

⁹ See Mays, *Micah*, 26–29.

¹⁰ See Bernard Renaud, *La Formation du livre de Michée: tradition et actualisation* (EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1977).

¹¹ See Renaud, *Formation*, 403.

¹² See Renaud, *Formation*, 409–15.

¹³ See Wolff, *Dodekapropheton 4: Micha* (BKAT 14/4; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener verlag, 1982). Wolff's work was later published in English as *Micah: A Commentary* (trans. by Gary Stansell; Augsburg Continental Commentaries; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

¹⁴ See Wolff, *Micah*, 17–22.

¹⁵ See Wolff, *Micah*, 22–24.

¹⁶ See Wolff, *Micah*, 26–27.

¹⁷ See McKane, *Micah: Introduction and Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998).

assume that they stem from the original words of the “historical” Micah, from around the second half of the eighth century. Secondly, we have Mic 4–5, which comprise salvation oracles; scholars agree that these materials have hardly any connections with the “historical” Micah,¹⁸ although it cannot be excluded that they may be inspired by Mic 1–3. Finally, Mic 6–7 are the last additions to the book.

More recently, scholars have realised that all the books of the Minor Prophets are likely to constitute a redactional unit, the so-called Book of the Twelve, which presents its own textual and thematic connections.¹⁹ The cogency of this assumption is implied by the fact that Ben Sira refers to the Minor Prophets as one entity (Sir 49:10); that the oldest manuscript of the Minor Prophets that was discovered at Qumran collects all the Minor Prophets in one scroll (4QXII^a); and that 4 Ezra 14 recognizes the Minor Prophets as a single volume.²⁰ Moreover, apparently also Josephus thought of the Minor Prophets to be a single book.²¹ Given the information found in Ben Sira, it seems that the unity of the Book of the Twelve was already acknowledged around 200 BCE. Therefore, the formation of the book of Micah should not be analysed exclusively as

¹⁸ Parallel to the historical-critical trajectory in Micah studies, a tendency among some scholars to defend most of the book as being part of the coherent design of the “historical” Micah continued. In 1966, Hammershaib challenged the incompatibility between doom and salvation oracles, and argued that a prophet of the 8th century could have spoken both; see Erling Hammershaib, *Some Aspects of Old Testament Prophecy from Isaiah to Malachi* (Theologiske Skrifter 4; Copenhagen: Rosenkelde og Bagger, 1966), 30-50. Similarly, in his commentary, Allen works with the assumption that only Mic 4:1–4 (earlier than the “historical” Micah) and 4:6–8; 7:8–20 (both later) represent redactional additions; see Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 251-52. Yet another conservative approach to the book of Micah is found in the commentary of Francis I. Andersen & David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24E; New York: Doubleday, 2000), and in the more recent Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

¹⁹ Among others, Nogalski is the scholar that gave the greatest contribution to the acknowledgement of the unity of the Book of the Twelve and to the study of its literary features. Nogalski was the first to argue that the books of the Minor Prophets in the Hebrew canon were ordered according to chronological principles and systematically edited to connect to each other through catchwords and common themes; see Nogalski’s two independent volumes, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993); and *Redactional Process in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 218; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993).

²⁰ In addition to internal literary features among the Minor Prophets, these elements are often regarded as external evidence that the Book of the Twelve represents a uniform prophetic book in the tradition; see Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 2-3; Barry A. Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Study in Text and Canon* (SBLDS 149; Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995), 2-13; Aaron Scharf, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftenübergreifender Redaktionsprozesse* (BZAW 260; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 8-10. For a comprehensive redaction-critical analysis that shows how the Book of the Twelve was conceived, expanded and reworked into its present shape through the insertion of common topics and the reinterpretation of older materials, see Jacob Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2008).

²¹ Josephus (*Ant. Iud.* i.40) ascribes to Moses and the prophets 13 books, probably considering 5 books for the Torah, 4 for the former prophets, and 4 for the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve); see Paul L. Reddit, “The Production and Reading of the Book of the Twelve”, in Nogalski & Marvin A. Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (SBL Symposium Series 15; Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 14.

part of the redaction of a single book, but rather as part of a longer, uniform editorial product that at some point involved all the Minor Prophets.²² This is not to say that the book of Micah did not develop from an original nucleus on its own (which is probably found in part of Mic 1–3), but it should be acknowledged that at some point its literary growth corresponded to that of the Book of the Twelve.²³

In the following, only the blaming of the prophets for their promises of peace will be addressed. Whenever the redactional analysis of the texts intertwines with the editorial processes that produced the Twelve, it will be signalled to the reader. Before moving forward, there is one last – and not surprising – clarification as regards the materials found in the core of the book of Micah. Many commentators had very few doubts when ascribing part of the book to Micah of Moreshet; however, it should be remembered that the quest for the “historical” Micah encounters the same difficulties we have seen for the “historical” Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and therefore the wish to recover (even partially) Micah’s own words cannot be upheld. Parts of Mic 1–3 may date back to the Assyrian period of the eighth century, but the book of Micah (its core included) has been vastly edited to address the future of Jerusalem after the Babylonian invasion and the exile, which represent the background against which the redactors intended the book to be read.²⁴

²² Although there is agreement as regards the Twelve as a redactional unit, a voice that has risen against this assumption is that of Ben Zvi, “Twelve Prophetic Books or ‘The Twelve’: A Few Preliminary Considerations”, in John D. W. Watts *et alii* (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honour of John D. W. Watts* (JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 125–56.

²³ It has even been suggested that a first stage in the redaction of the Book of the Twelve only included Hosea-Amos-Micah-Zephaniah, to which the books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, and Habakkuk were later added. Evidence of this assumption is found in the common superscriptions and main themes among Hosea-Amos-Micah-Zephaniah; see Jörg Jeremias, *Hosea und Amos: Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheten* (FAT 13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 231–43. Highly critical of this reconstruction is Levin, “Das ‘Vierprophetenbuch’: Ein exegetischer Nachruf”, *ZAW* 123 (2011), 221–35.

²⁴ As rightly considered by Henry McKeating, *The Books of Amos, Hosea and Micah* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 10–11; Mays, *Micah*, 23; Rex Mason, *Micah, Nahum, Obadiah* (OTG 28; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 49–53; Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets vol.2* (Berit Olam; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 342; Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 137. See also Section 3 of the current chapter; see note 32.

2. Blaming the Prophets in Micah

The book of Micah appears to be marginally concerned with the role of prophets and the nature of foreseeing. Two passages only, namely Mic 2:6–11 and 3:5–8, deal with prophets, and they both convey a rather negative depiction of the prophetic class. However, the hostile nature of Mic 3:5–8 is evident, but the sense of Mic 2:6–11 is less than clear. There is a tendency in scholarship to consider Mic 2:6–11 to be part of the conflict between “true” and “false” prophets,²⁵ but this assumption appears to be the result of an over interpretation. It must be noticed that it is not even certain if “prophecy” could be taken as one of the concerns of Mic 2:6–11, because the term נביא or the verb נבא never recur in this passage. This text in a certain way deals with the broad idea of foreseeing, but it uses a peculiar word, נָטַף (in Mic 2:11), which literally means “to drip”, and only in the *hiphil* and without a direct object can sometimes be understood to mean “speaking” or even “preaching” in the fashion of a prophet.²⁶

Moreover, if one considers the immediate context, the oracle in Mic 2:6–11 does not show any attack on the prophets, but rather addresses generic oppressors of the community who are identified with civil leaders (Mic 2:7–10).²⁷ A closer look into Mic 2:11, which is concerned with dishonest predictions (identified by the term שֶׁקֶר) confirms the accuracy of this reading. In the Masoretic Text, Mic 2:11 reads as follow,

If a man walks by a wind²⁸ of falsehood and tells lies saying, I will predict (אָטֵף) to you wine and strong drink, he will be a man who speaks like a prophet (מְנַטֵּף) for this people.

²⁵ See A. S. van der Woude, “Micah and the Pseudo-Prophets”, VT 19, 1969, 244–60; Allen, *Micah*, 294; Renaud, *Michée, Sophonie, Nahum* (Coll. Sources Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1987), 47; Juan I. Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty: A Commentary on the Book of Micah* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: Handsel, 1989), 27; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 296. Sweeney accepts this to be a possibility; see Sweeney, *Prophets 2*, 362.

²⁶ See H. Madl, “נָטַף”, in TDOT 9, 399. In this context (Mic 2:6, 11), McKeating takes the term to refer to ecstatic prophetic trances and argues that the mention of wine and strong drinks hints at these practices; see McKeating, *Micah*, 165. This is a possibility, but little support to this hypothesis comes from other occurrences of the verb in the *hiphil*, since they never suggest divinatory trance (e.g. Amos 7:16; Ezek 20:46; 21:2).

²⁷ As rightly stated by Wolff, *Micah*, 75; Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 26; James Limburg, *Hosea-Micah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 171; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I* (NICOT 17; Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 312.

²⁸ The recurrence of the term רוּחַ in this context carries a negative sense, and any reference to “(divine) spirit” must be avoided. The passage seems to present a man whose claims abuse the credulity of his own people; see Wolff, *Micah*, 68, 72; Renaud, *Michée*, 51; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 312. It is unlikely, as Andersen and Freedman argue, that רוּחַ stands in apposition to אִישׁ, reading the hendiadys as “man of spirit” (similarly to Hos 9:7), and therefore as a synonym for “prophet”; see Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 328.

It appears evident that this text does not present accusations aimed at a prophet, but rather it contains a statement attacking the gullibility (or frivolity) of the people, who are prone to accept as their prophet anyone who gives them what they want.²⁹ Therefore, the pericope Mic 2:6–11 appears to be of little interest for the aim of this study, which looks at the blaming of the prophets for their messages of peace. Only Mic 3:5–8 provides a suitable case-study, since these verses clearly address the prophets directly (the verb נבא is used in v.5), and accuse them of proclaiming peace or war according to the fee they receive.

3. Prophets, Seers and Diviners (Mic 3:5–8): Overview and Outline

The general indictment of the community in Mic 3 contains accusations aimed at the prophetic class. As regards the outline of the chapter, most commentators recognize three literary units (vv.1–4; 5–8; 9–12),³⁰ each containing an individual judgement oracle, which is introduced by distinctive formulae (vv.1, 5 and 9).³¹ The main target of these oracles are the leaders of the southern kingdom of Judah, that here are addressed with the metonymy Jacob/Israel (vv.1, 9).³² They should be administering justice fairly, but instead, they are

²⁹ This is the understanding of Smith, *Micah*, 27, which seems to be the most plausible. Another reasonable interpretation takes this vain prophet, who only speaks of wine, to be the perfect representative of the sinful people described in Mic 2:1–5; see Wolff, *Micah*, 84; Delbert R. Hillers, *A Commentary on the Book of the prophet Micah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 37; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 314.

³⁰ There is agreement as regards this division; see Allen, *Micah*, 304; Wolff, *Micah*, 92; Hillers, *Micah*, 41ff; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 31ff; Renaud, *Michée*, 58ff; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 316ff; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 343.

³¹ As rightly recognized by Allen, *Micah*, 304; Renaud, *Michée*, 56; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 343.

³² The text of Mic 3 is concerned with the leaders of Jacob and Israel (Mic 3:1, 9), but overall is clearly addressed at Judah (Mic 3:10–12). Since Mic 3 targets the leaders of the community (chiefs, priests and prophets) without ever mentioning a king, and since it refers to Judah as “Israel”, it seems that this text could easily stem from post-587 settings. As regards this, Biddle argues that in the book of Micah, the referents of the terms “Jacob” and “Israel” can vary. In the core collection (Mic 1–3) their meaning relates to the literary context provided by the “summons to hear” formulae that are seen in Hosea, Amos and reprised in Micah (Hos 4:1; 5:1; Amos 3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4 and Mic 3:1, 9). Therefore, in this context, “Jacob” refers to the Northern kingdom and “Israel” to the Southern one, and the focus on Jerusalem in Mic 3:12 matches the focus on Samaria in Mic 1 and completes a cyclic structure. In the later development of the book (namely, Mic 4–5), the terms “Jacob” and “Israel”, on the other hand, refer to the eschatological remnant of the community; see Biddle, “‘Israel’ and ‘Jacob’ in the book of Micah”, in Nogalski & Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, 149–64. Biddle’s study offers an interesting solution, which has the merit of looking at Micah as part of the Book of the Twelve (as regards this, see also Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 3–12). As Biddle states, it seems that even the core collection of Micah conforms to the post-exilic usage of the terms “Jacob” (North) and “Israel” (South), and this points to a later redactional program that produced not only the final form of Micah, but also that of the Twelve;

depriving the weak of their own rights, to the point that they figuratively devour the skin and bones of the people (vv.2–3). The charge of perverting justice is reprised in the final and pivotal part of the chapter (vv.9–12), in which judges, priests and prophets altogether are exposed for their greediness, which will eventually lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (v.12). The central part of the oracle (vv.5–8), on the other hand, contains a specific attack on the prophetic class alone (or on a larger group of foretellers, given the expressions הַנְּבִיאִים, “the prophets”, הַחֹזִים, “the seers”, and הַקְּסָמִים, “the diviners”, in vv.5–7).

As regards the dating and setting of these materials, many commentators trust the authorship given in the colophon of the book of Micah, at least as regards the first three chapters. Therefore, Mic 3 is often ascribed to the “historical” Micah or to the “times” of Micah, with minor later additions.³³ Traditionally, the prophet Micah lived under the rule of the southern kings Jotham, Ahab and Hezekiah (Mic 1:1). Supposedly, he was active from the middle of the eighth until the beginning of the seventh centuries. As regards Mic 3 specifically, some consider the years after the fall of Samaria (722) to be the occasion that prompted this oracle,³⁴ while others tend to date it closer to Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem (701).³⁵

However, the superscription in Mic 1:1 grants from 20 to 53 years of prophetic activity to the “historical” Micah, which is a considerable amount of time that could hardly have produced only the few oracles generally attributed to the prophet (Mic 1–3).³⁶ Besides, the superscription is probably a later addition that belongs to the activity of the redactors who edited the Twelve as a single book.³⁷ Their aim was to collect the Minor Prophets in chronological order to match the three main periods of biblical Israel (pre-exilic, exilic, post-exilic), and therefore Mic 1:1 is of little value when dating the materials found in the book.³⁸ This chapter is difficult to date

see Biddle, “‘Israel’ and ‘Jacob’ in the book of Micah”, 148. That the addressee of Mic 3 is the southern kingdom is accepted by many commentators; see Allen, *Micah*, 306; Wolff, *Micah*, 96; Hillers, *Micah*, 43; Renaud, *Michée*, 57.

³³ See McKeating, *Micah*, 4; Allen, *Micah*, 241; Wolff, *Micah*, 2; Hillers, *Micah*, 1; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 287.

³⁴ See McKeating, *Micah*, 169; Allen, *Micah*, 243; Wolff, *Micah*, 97.

³⁵ See Hillers, *Micah*, 5; Renaud, *Michée*, 57.

³⁶ As observed by Renaud, *Michée*, 21.

³⁷ In the Book of the Twelve, the superscriptions are stereotypical additions that work as connectives throughout the collection (e.g. Isa 1:1 and Hos 1:1, which present the same list of kings); see Nogalski, *Literary Precursors*, 76-7, 127; John D. W. Watts, “Superscriptions and Incipits in the Book of the Twelve”, in Nogalski & Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve*, 110-24. Some have argued that they are the product of a Deuteronomistic hand; see Scharf, *Zwölfprophetenbuchs*, 31-49.

³⁸ Apparently, in the Masoretic canon, a parallelism has been traced between Major and Minor prophets. The Assyrian period is represented by Isaiah, who is matched with the Minor Prophets from Hosea to Nahum; Jeremiah represents the Babylonian period, so from Habakkuk to Zephaniah; finally, Ezekiel corresponds to the exile and the restoration of the temple, so Haggai to Malachi; see Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 133-34.

due to the lack of referents, although the mention of the fall of Jerusalem signals that 587 can safely be taken as *terminus post quem*. However, some of the features that will be discussed below point to a later dating (Persian period), at least for the accusations aimed at the prophets.

3.1 Translation and Critical Notes

5 Thus says YHWH concerning the prophets, who cause my people to err, and when they bite with their teeth, they cry “peace”,³⁹ but when someone does not give what they want,⁴⁰ they promise to him war. 6 Therefore, night you shall have from vision, and it will become dark⁴¹ from divination;⁴² the sun will set upon the prophets and dark will be the day upon them. 7 The seers⁴³ will be ashamed and the diviners confused, they shall all cover their moustache, because there will be no answer from God. 8 But I am truly filled with power, the spirit of YHWH,⁴⁴ and justice and courage to declare to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

³⁹ G renders all the verbs in v.5a as parallels, τάδε λέγει κύριος ἐπὶ τοὺς προφῆτας τοὺς πλανῶντας τὸν λαόν μου, τοὺς δάκνοντας ἐν τοῖς ὁδοῦσιν αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσοντας ἐπ’ αὐτὸν εἰρήνην, “thus says the Lord to the prophets, who lead my people astray, who bite with their teeth, and who cry peace”. Likewise, also V and Syr. Conversely, T gives a better understanding, because it takes 5aβ and 5aγ to be subordinate clauses to 5aα, which is clearly the sense conveyed by MT; see Wolff, *Micah*, 91; Renaud, *Michée*, 60.

⁴⁰ The MT לאִיתֵן עַל־פִּיהֶם, “when someone does not give on/upon their mouth”, presents some problems. G (καὶ οὐκ ἔδωθη εἰς τὸ στόμα αὐτῶν) and V (*si quis non dederit in ore eorum*) understand a parallel with v.5b and keep the imagery of eating going. Similarly, most modern commentators; see Allen, *Micah*, 312; Hillers, *Micah*, 44; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32; Renaud, *Michée*, 62. However, as van der Woude signals, MT does not technically read “to give in the mouth”, which would present the Hebrew preposition –ב, and not –על. Besides, the Hebrew sentence נתן על־מה always means “(to give) according to the word/command” (e.g. Gen 41:40; 43:37; 45:21; Num 3:51; 2 Kgs 23:35); see van der Woude, *Micah* (NijKerk: Callenbach, 1976), 109ff. Wolff, who follows van der Woude, adds that the original meaning of the expression implies the function of the term פה (namely, speech, command), and not the organ; therefore, it points to the fact that the prophets promise war to those who do not wish to accept their demands; see Wolff, *Micah*, 102ff. Both van der Woude’s and Wolff’s suggestions improve the understanding of the odd expression לאִיתֵן עַל־פִּיהֶם and are applied in this translation; see also Section 3.3 in the present chapter.

⁴¹ MT presents here a verbal form, but commentators usually prefer the rendering with a substantive (darkness) to parallel the previous statement in v.6aα; see Wolff, *Micah*, 91; Hillers, *Micah*, 44; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32; Renaud, *Michée*, 62. This stylistic adjustment seems unnecessary.

⁴² Some commentators give to the preposition מן a privative meaning, “night without vision, darkness without divination”; see Wolff, *Micah*, 91; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 32; Renaud, *Michée*, 62. Others opt for a literal translation (see Hillers, *Micah*, 44; Anderson & Freedman, *Micah*, 358) which should be preferred. The explicit mention that the sun will set on the prophets is clearly the result of the darkness that permeates vision and divination, so the emphasis here rests on the source of foretelling.

⁴³ G reads οἱ ὁπῶντες τὰ ἐνύπνια, “those who see night-visions”, most probably pointing to oneiromancy.

⁴⁴ The sentence אֶת־רוּחַ יְהוָה, “the spirit of YHWH” does not work grammatically (the *nota accusativi* אֶת is without copula) and interrupts the threefold sequence of the resolution of the speaker (power, justice, courage); therefore, many commentators take it to be a later insertion; see Mays, *Micah*, 81; Wolff, *Micah*, 96, 101; Renaud, *Michée*, 66; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 321. Conversely, Hillers argues that none of these terms need to be glossed, because they do not read obscurely, and he defends its presence to be genuine; see Hillers, *Micah*, 45. Similarly, also Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 377.

This unit does not present major difficulties and reads straightforwardly in depicting the prophets as gluttons who deliver good omens (שלום) to those who pay them but have no remorse when promising war (מלחמה) to those who do not give anything to them in exchange (v.5). Soon enough, their visions and divinations will cease (v.6); they will no longer be able to foresee YHWH's will and shall be forced to wander in mourning (v.7).⁴⁵ However, some minor textual problems and inconsistencies are easily recognized throughout this pericope. Some commentators deem the messenger formula (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, “thus says YHWH”, in v.5) to be problematic, because it fails to introduce YHWH's direct speech, to the point that some have raised doubts about its genuineness.⁴⁶ Similarly, the mention of the “spirit of YHWH” in Mic 3:8 has been deemed to be a later gloss, which seems a sound possibility.⁴⁷ Finally, this unit presents a puzzling shift in the grammatical person that refer to the prophets, since v.5 presents the prophets in third person pl., while a shift to second person pl. follows in v.6a, and eventually the third person pl. is resumed in vv.6b–7. This abrupt change does not seem to follow any precise pattern and appears to be a common feature throughout Mic 3.⁴⁸ It should also be

⁴⁵ The action of covering one's moustache (or the upper lip) in Mic 3:7 is a traditional sign of mourning; Ezek 24:17, 22. See Allen, *Micah*, 313; Wolff, *Micah*, 104; Renaud, *Michée*, 64.

⁴⁶ There is disagreement in scholarship as regards where the direct speech of YHWH begins in v.5. It must be considered that, right after the introductory formula, there is nothing in v.5 that allows us to presuppose a first-person speech spoken by YHWH (the expression על־הנביאים, “concerning the prophets”, introduces a statement *about* the prophets, and does not address them directly; similarly, the adverb לכן, “therefore”, in the opening of v.6, is another odd incipit for a speech). Therefore, some deem the formula to be an editorial addition which is meant to emphasize that the accusations aimed at the prophets come from YHWH. In this case, the speaker would be Micah throughout Mic 3; see Mays, *Micah*, 81; Wolff, *Micah*, 91. Allen reaches the same conclusions as regards the speaker in vv.5–8 but does not question the authenticity of the formula; see Allen, *Micah*, 312. Hillers instead states that the adverb לכן is not a normal beginning, and he argues that the addressing in second person pl. in v.6 is a vocative, which signals the beginning of YHWH's direct speech; see Hillers, *Micah*, 44. Conversely, others take the pericope vv.5–7 to represent words spoken directly by YHWH except for the formula; see Renaud, *Michée*, 62 and Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 360.

⁴⁷ See note 44 above.

⁴⁸ It should be acknowledged that in Mic 3:1–12, the use of grammatical persons to refer to the addressees of the oracle is confusing. The leaders of Jacob and Israel are addressed in second person pl. in 3:1–2, but then the anonymous speaker turns to third person pl. for no logical reason in vv.3–4. Likewise, the prophets are referred to in third person pl. in v.5, in second person pl. in v.6b, and again in third person pl. in vv.6b–7. Finally, in v.9, the speaker calls out to the leaders of Jacob and Israel by using a second person pl., but then they appear in the third person pl. in v.11; finally, the final judgement addresses them again in the second person pl. in v.12. Scholars have long acknowledged this feature, but there is no agreement as regards a possible explanation. Since such an abrupt shift in the addresses appears diffusely in the book of Micah (Mic 2), some have taken it to be a stylistic feature of the book itself to make the scenes more vivid; see Renaud, *Michée*, 56. It has also been suggested that the use of the third person pl. recurs more often in the verses of judgement, because Micah presents his verdict to the leaders of Jerusalem directly. This latter solution is proposed by Andersen and Freedman, and although it is suitable in some instances (vv.4, 7 and 12), it does not account for abrupt shifts such as vv.3, 6 and 11. Nonetheless, Andersen and Freedman claim that these latter cases are part of the symmetrical structure of each individual saying; see Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 348, 359. Similarly, others have considered that the use of third person pronouns is due to the inalterable pattern of judgement oracles,

noticed that the extensive accusations aimed at the prophetic class represents an abrupt change of topic, because Mic 3 is mostly concerned with the general blaming of the “heads and chiefs” of the community (vv.1, 9) caused by their unfair administration of justice, which is never mentioned in vv.5–8. Therefore, a case can be made for this pericope to represent a secondary addition, which was triggered by the original oracle about the injustice perpetrated by the leaders of the community (Mic 3:1–4, 9–12), with which the prophets who promise peace or war have been assimilated.⁴⁹

3.2 The Secondary Character of Mic 3:5–8

Three elements seem to be particularly fruitful to argue for the secondary origin of Mic 3:5–8 in ch. 3. Firstly, the use of the introductory formulae throughout the chapter clearly sets Mic 3:5–8 apart from the others. As stated above, the summoning of the leaders of Israel and Jacob opens the units in Mic 3:1–4 and 9–12, while the pericope against the prophets presents instead the messenger formula, in one of its two occurrences in the book of Micah (Mic 2:3). Some commentators have noticed this imbalance and have argued that the messenger formula may have supplanted an original “summon to listen” at the beginning of the unit;⁵⁰ however, no textual evidence is found to support this possibility. Others, on the other hand, have argued that, originally, the oracle may have been introduced by the Hebrew *הוי*, “woe”, giving to the pericope the structure of a “woe oracle”;⁵¹ however, the Masoretic text and the versions do not show any evidence to support this claim. Nonetheless, it must be observed that taking

hence, the participles in Mic 3:2 serve as vocatives and are necessarily continued with a third person pl.; see Hillers, *Micah*, 42. However, none of these explanations manage to account for all the instances in which the shift from second to third person pl. is found in Mic 3. This feature is probably due to the redactional transmission of the text, although no recognizable pattern throughout the text has yet been found.

⁴⁹ Scholars have long noticed that the unit against the prophets (Mic 3:5–8) disrupts the outline of Mic 3 but have rarely argued for its secondary origin. For example, Wolff considers vv.5–8 to constitute a self-standing judgement speech, but he also argues that all the sayings in Mic 3 present the same basic structure and constitute a coherent unit overall; see Wolff, *Micah*, 92-3. In a similar way, Hillers states that the pericope about the prophets is marked off from the rest by the messenger formula, but he still accepts its thematic relation to the other units; see Hillers, *Micah*, 45. The only explicit mention of a possible independent origin of Mic 3:5–8 recurs in McKeating’s commentary on Micah. McKeating considers that the book of Micah has largely been reworked at least up to 586, but he takes the first three chapters to be “mostly authentic oracles of Micah”, and therefore he dates them to the 8th century (*Amos-Hosea-Micah*, 11). Nonetheless, when considering the text of Mic 3:5, McKeating states that the introductory formula shows that the following verses were not the original continuation of Mic 3:1–4 but had been placed there because of the common topic; see McKeating, *Amos-Hosea-Micah*, 168. McKeating does not expand on this assumption, nor does he explain who could have added this pericope; nevertheless, his suggestion seems worthy of further investigation.

⁵⁰ Thus H. F. Fuhs, *Sehen und Schauen. Die Wurzel hzh im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament: Ein Beitrag zum prophetischen Offenbarungsempfang* (FZB 32; Würzburg: Echter, 1978), 207; followed by Wolff, *Micah*, 94.

⁵¹ As proposed by Karl Budde, “Micha 2 und 3”, ZAW 38, 1920, 20; followed by Hillers, *Micah*, 44.

exclusively the messenger formula to be a redactional insertion, the verse would be bereft of the antecedent for the expression *על־הנביאים*, “concerning the prophets”.⁵² It is therefore safe to assume that the messenger formula is genuine in the pericope, and consequently this unit presents a peculiar introduction when compared to the other two in the chapter.

Secondly, there are form-structural similarities between the units in Mic 3:1–4 and vv.9–12, while vv.5–8 show significant differences in this regard. The two units that directly address the leaders of the community make use of the same key terms and draw on the same motif (e.g. the recurrence of the terms *ראשי וקציני*, “heads and rulers”, in the address, and especially *משפט*, “justice” in vv.1, 9, and *רעה*, “evil” in vv.2, 4, 11). However, such key terminology is not found in the unit about the prophets. Moreover, the accusations aimed at the prophets seem to expand on the theme of the silence of YHWH (v.4) and do not continue the accusations aimed at the ruling class for the terrible state of affairs of the community (which is the main theme in Mic 3:1–3, 9–12).⁵³ YHWH, it is said in v.4, will hide his face from the leaders of Jacob and Israel, and they will not receive answers from him because of their evil. Mic 3:5–8 (especially vv.6–7) clearly expands on this theme and explains why there will be no answers from YHWH (e.g. the recurrence of the word *ענה*, “answer”, in vv.4 and 7). In a similar way, the prophets are listed among those responsible for injustice in Jerusalem in Mic 3:11 and are exposed for their greediness (*ונביאיה בכסף יקסמו*, “her prophets give divination for money”, in v.11a). It seems that Mic 3:5–8 reprises these two secondary details in the chapter and reworks them in a specific accusation aimed at the prophetic class. Since neither YHWH’s silence, nor the specific actions of the prophets receive emphasis in the *climax* of the oracle in Mic 3:12, Mic 3:5–8 reads rather oddly in the context of the accusations aimed at the ruling classes of Jerusalem. In Mic 3, the charges are always aimed at generic leaders (e.g. the address to “heads/rulers”, in vv.1, 9) or at specific social classes that are taken altogether (e.g. the expression *ראשיה וכהניה ונביאיה*, “her heads, her priests, her prophets”, in v.11a). This is not the case in Mic 3:5–8, which focuses exclusively on the faults of the prophets, and once again differs from what appears to be customary in the chapter.

Finally, attention should be brought to a minor, and yet significant, stylistic feature which is absent in Mic 3:5–8 when compared to Mic 3:1–4, 9–12. In the chapter, the theme of injustice is displayed in vivid tones (the leaders are said to love evil and to hate good in v.2, and they

⁵² As rightly noted by Renaud, *Michée*, 62.

⁵³ From among commentators, only Wolff rightly remarks on the thematic connection between Mic 3:4 and the content of 3:5–8; see Wolff, *Micah*, 101.

despise equity in v.9) and some gruesome imagery (as the metaphorical cannibalism in vv.2–3 and the bloodshed on which the city was built in v.10). In Mic 3:5–8, not only does the author not mention the *motif* of injustice among the ruling class, but he does not resume the use of grim metaphors to emphasize the condemnation of the prophets. In Mic 3:11–12, the prophets, who are in the company of corrupt judges and immoral priests, are condemned for what seems to be the practice of bribery,⁵⁴ which will eventually lead to the destruction of the city and the annihilation of the temple. It seems at least suspicious that such severe implications are treated somehow lightly in Mic 3:5–8, especially as it appears clear that this unit holds the prophets responsible for the miserable state of the community (e.g. the expression *המתעים את-עמי*, “[the prophets] who cause my people to err”, in v.5). It should be added that, when it comes to language and style, the accusations aimed at the prophets in Mic 3:5–8 appear to draw largely from the well-known motif about the religious class that we have encountered in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This clearly questions their genuineness in Mic 3, where these stereotypical accusations are never aimed at the leaders of the community.

Before concluding, a comment on the addressees of Mic 3:5–8 seems necessary. This pericope is generally taken to be addressing the prophets directly (because of the presence of the second person pl. pronoun *לכם*, “to you”, in v.6a).⁵⁵ However, the second person pl. clearly conflicts with the reference in third person pl. to the prophets in vv.5, 6b–7 (especially with the sentences *ובשחזים*, “the sun will set upon the prophets”, in v.6b, and *ובשו הקסמים ועטו*, “the seers will be ashamed and the diviners confused”, in v.7). Given this discrepancy, it appears plausible to consider two different groups as the addressees in Mic 3:5–8. The leaders of the community are the ones addressed in second person pl. (“to you” in v.6a) and are those who will experience *לילה מחזון וחשכה מקסם*, “night from vision, darkness from divination”, because the prophets (who are addressed in third person pl.) will be forbidden any divine responses (v.6b).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Most commentators agree that the message in Mic 3:11a is an attack on the illicit gains of chiefs, priests and prophets; see McKeating, *Micah*, 169; Allen, *Micah*, 318; Wolff, *Micah*, 107; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 35; Renaud, *Michée*, 69; Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 39; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 324.

⁵⁵ Since Mic 3:5 is generally taken to be the introduction of yet another privileged *locus* of conflict between “true” and “false” prophets, the pronoun “you” in v.6 has been generally understood to refer to the prophets; see Allen, *Micah*, 310; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 33; Hillers, *Micah*, 45; Renaud, *Michée*, 65; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 320; Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 36; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 373.

⁵⁶ This reading is suggested by van der Woude, who rightly argues that in Mic 3:5–8, Micah is speaking to the leaders *regarding* the prophets, and not directly to the prophets; see van der Woude, *Micha*, 99, 112. Similarly, also Wolff, *Micah*, 104.

Obviously, none of these elements, when taken individually, may be adequate to establish that the materials about the prophets in Mic 3:5–8 represent a later addition. However, when the difference in tone and theme is coupled with the peculiar focus on the prophets alone, which makes use of stereotypical elements already seen in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and when one adds the presence of the unusual messenger formula that introduces the unit, an argument for the secondary character of Mic 3:5–8 appears quite plausible. The blaming of the prophets in Mic 3:5–8 probably represents a later supplement to an oracle of judgement about the leaders of Jerusalem (Mic 3:1–4, 9–12). The extended formula that opens the pericope (Mic 3:5) introduces the faults of the prophets, though the real recipient of the oracle is the ruling class.

3.3 Peace or War: Micah and the (False?) Prophets

The attack against the prophets in Mic 3:5–8 has often (if not exclusively) been interpreted to be a conflict between “true” and “false” prophets.⁵⁷ However, from among all the excerpts we have covered so far, the presence of the so-called “false” prophets appears particularly inappropriate and difficult to defend in Mic 3:5–8. An obvious consideration is that this text does not question the validity of the prophets’ visions (Mic 3:6);⁵⁸ a second consideration is that it does not accuse them of being overly optimistic (they promise peace *or* war; Mic 3:5). Above all, what really undermines any references to “false” prophecy in Mic 3:5–8 is that the prophets are never accused of falsehood or lying (neither the word שָׁקֵר nor a synonym, as the term כֶּזֶב seen in Ezek 13:6–8, ever recur in this text).

It is a common place in scholarship that Mic 3:5–8 singles out the prophets for their greediness and gluttony. These prophets have no respect for their role and give good omens to whoever pays them a good fee and show no remorse when promising war to those who do not

⁵⁷ This interpretation has been developed especially by van der Woude, who argues that Mic 3 is Micah’s direct reaction to the sayings of the “false” prophets that are recorded in Mic 2:12–13 and 4:1–5; see van der Woude, “Micah in Dispute with the Pseudo-Prophets”, VT 19 (1969), 249. Moreover, nearly every commentary interprets Mic 3:5–8 in the light of the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets; see McKeating, *Micah*, 168; Allen, *Micah*, 313; Wolff, *Micah*, 104; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 34; Hillers, *Micah*, 46; Renaud, *Michée*, 66; Limburg, *Hosea-Micah*, 176; Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 35; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 320; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 376; Waltke, *Micah*, 168–73. A solitary voice that opposes this interpretation is that of Carroll, who favours a reading of Mic 3:5–8 as an attack on *all* the prophets that comes from a non-prophetic voice; see Carroll, “Night without Vision: Micah and the Prophets”, in Florentino García Martínez *et alii* (eds.), *The Scriptures and the Scrolls: Studies in Honour of A. S. van der Woude on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday* (VTS 49; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 74–84.

⁵⁸ As rightly considered by Wolff, *Micah*, 103; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 33; Hillers, *Micah*, 46; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 319. Waltke points out that these prophets are also known for resorting to proscribed divination, but he maintains that the focus here is mainly on their prophesying for personal gain; see Waltke, *Micah*, 174.

pay them.⁵⁹ Since in the Hebrew Bible prophets and diviners are generally paid or rewarded for their omens (e.g. 1 Sam 9:8; 1 Kgs 14:3; 2 Kgs 4:8, 42; 5:15; 8:8; Amos 7:12–13), the assumption is that the accusation in Mic 3:5 points to illicit gain, which supposedly comes in the form of bribes (as it was the case in Mic 3:11).⁶⁰ Therefore, the promise of *shalom* is always interpreted as the prophets' reassurance that everything will work out well for those who can afford their predictions. This reading has sometimes produced further implications. Some have argued that promising well-being for their own interests is a violation of the prophets' religious prerogative.⁶¹ Others point out that "true" prophets predict doom to encourage repentance and to promote the people's salvation; only "false" prophets, on the other hand, predict that everything will be well without proposing conditions.⁶² It has even been suggested that these prophets are part of a conspiracy by the wealthy classes, who have bought the prophets' complicity to exploit the poor; the poor obviously could not afford the prophets' services and in return have seen the upper classes' oppression justified by their oracles.⁶³ Generally, the promises of peace in this context are taken as evidence that these prophets say whatever pleases their customers, which seems a sound understanding.⁶⁴

However, it appears quite evident that most scholars' readings favour the (biased) interpretation that there is, in the biblical tradition, a good way to be a prophet, contrasted with a bad way to carry out the role. Micah, who embodies the "true" prophet's way, has no reservations at all about exposing the greed of his colleagues, who are (by scholars) assimilated to the group of the "false" prophets. That this understanding is not supported by the content of Mic 3:5–8 appears clear from the fact that there is no tension nor binary opposition to the message of the prophets. In Jeremiah, the "false" prophets are always taking a specific side (there is no consistency in the "sides" attributed to them, but that is not relevant). They promise peace, and *not* war; they promise that Babylon will be destroyed, and *not* that Babylon will rule

⁵⁹ Scholars agree about these general considerations, although there may be minor nuances; see Mays, *Micah*, 83; Wolff, *Micah*, 103; Hillers, *Micah*, 45; Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 35; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 320; Waltke, *Micah*, 174.

⁶⁰ See note 54 in this chapter.

⁶¹ Achtemeier argues that Micah is attacking the prophets because their message is tailored according to what they get in return, and so they are disrespecting their call, which was, at least originally, genuine; see Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 319.

⁶² This is the interpretation found in Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 34.

⁶³ This reconstruction is found in Alfaro's commentary, and it appears to be highly influenced by the dichotomy between "true" and "false" prophets, because he takes the "true" prophets to be promoters of social justice. According to Alfaro, the duty of the prophets is to foment holy war against the social oppressors, but instead they are now conniving with them, by promising *shalom* for money. Micah, who is a true prophet and loyal to his call, is determined to fight against all the odds for social justice; see Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 34–36.

⁶⁴ See Mays, *Micah*, 83; Wolff, *Micah*, 103; Hillers, *Micah*, 45; Sweeney, *Prophets 2*, 370; Waltke, *Micah*, 174.

over Judah; they say that the exile will be short, and *not* long; they say it will be A and *not* B. This *aut-aut* structure is the very foundation of the conflict between them and Jeremiah, especially in Jer 27–29. Since the prophets promote only one message at a time, Jeremiah can speak his counter message (as in, the redactors’ message). This is not the case for Micah, where the prophets say that the future can bring peace *vel* war, *either A or B*. There is no counter message to the words of these prophets, because they can freely promise “peace” or “war” according to the payment they receive. If there is a target in Mic 3:5–8, it is not the falsehood of the message, but the very fact that this message can fluctuate and be positive for those who give the prophets what they want and extremely negative for those who do not.⁶⁵ This leads us to some further considerations about those people who may resort to prophecy.

There is little doubt that, after the payment of a substantial fee to a prophet, one would be considerably happier to hear a good response about future things. The general interpretation that the prophets are pleasing their customers is to the point as regards this aspect. However, some questions arise as regards the one who, according to the Hebrew of Mic 3:5c, לא־יתן עָלָי פִּיהֶם, “does not give what they [the prophets] want”. If, as is often the case, this sentence is interpreted as offering a contrast between wealthy and poor people, in terms of who can afford good omens and who cannot, it seems quite peculiar to accept that the poor would still go and ask a prophet, and eventually pay to receive bad news.⁶⁶ A more reasonable interpretation is that this text compares those who trust the prophets and those who do not and therefore refuse

⁶⁵ Support for the interpretation proposed above comes from the insightful reading of the passage proposed by Carroll, who rejects the dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets in this context. He rightly observes that the opposition between good and bad prophets never constitutes a problem-free solution, since it disregards the fact that one can be “true” or “false” according to a point of view. In fact, prophets are “flexible”, because depending on the occasion, a prophet can be “true” or “false”; see Carroll, “Night Without Vision”, 79. Not too dissimilarly, Sweeney, who however accepts the framework of a prophetic conflict (paired with some trust in the “historical” Micah as the author), yet shows a deep understanding of implications that are generally overlooked by others. Sweeney states that Micah is highly polemical with regard to the other prophets because they adapt their message, so his accusation is one of professional misconduct. Moreover, as Sweeney admits, it is impossible to verify the trustworthiness of Micah’s claims. If the problem were the message of peace instead of doom, Sweeney notes, Micah would have probably accused also Isaiah, a contemporary who never foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, Micah’s point of view cannot be considered necessarily “true” nor can it represent all the prophetic tradition; it may appear so only because here Micah is speaking; see Sweeney, *Prophets 2*, 371.

⁶⁶ This objection may seem naïve, but it is simply based on the assumption that only the rich would receive *shalom* omens, as supposed by Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 35. Similarly, if the prophets are interested only in money (see Mays, *Micah*, 83; Wolff, *Micah*, 103; Hillers, *Micah*, 45; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 320; Waltke, *Micah*, 174) they probably would not discourage any clients from coming back by giving bad omens, no matter how small the fee. Undoubtedly, the reproach aimed at the leaders of the community who oppress the people (Mic 3:1–4, 9–12) plays a role in this interpretation of Micah as a defender of the lower social classes; however, the chiefs of Jacob and Israel are oppressing the entire population (עַמִּי, “my people”, in Mic 3:3, 5), not only the poorer strata.

to request their services. The accusations aimed at the prophets do not presuppose the point of view of those who cannot pay for omens, but of those who *do not want* them at all – small wonder that the prophets wish for war against this latter category!⁶⁷ Therefore, it seems plausible to take this passage as conveying criticism towards *all* the prophets, whose prophetic gift is considered flawed at its core. To be precise, criticism is not directed exclusively at the prophets (according to the Hebrew נביאים, in v.5), but also at seers (חזים) and diviners (קסמים), a fact that leads to the inevitable conclusion that Mic 3:5–8 is a polemic about divination and professional diviners, and not a conflict between “true” and “false” prophets.

That this interpretation is the most plausible is supported by the fact that visions and divination will cease at once (Mic 3:6–7), and YHWH will not answer the prophets, the seers and the diviners. The fact that these three professional groups of foretellers are listed together in Mic 3:5–8 evidently points to the failure of every technique of foretelling, because YHWH refuses to be involved in any of these *media*.⁶⁸ It can also be added that the punishment of the prophets (the absence of visions in the future) does not suit the stereotypical characteristics of prophetic conflicts as seen in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. There, the prophets are false, and everything they say comes from their deceitful minds and not from YHWH (Jer 14:14; 23:16; Ezek 13:3); there is no point in punishing them with the ending of divine visions, because they have never truly experienced them. In Mic 3:5–8, the legitimacy of these techniques is not questioned, but their validity is revoked from that moment onwards. Why such a verdict is pronounced is implied in Mic 3:8.

Given the ambivalence and ambiguity of the messages of the prophets (it could be peace or war) and the influence that money has on the responses, the acts of prophesying, foreseeing and performing divination have been proven to be incapable of correcting the ways of Israel and Jacob. The task of redeeming the people has then been undertaken by the speaker of Mic

⁶⁷ The different translation of Mic 3:5c given by van der Woude and Wolff (see footnote 40 above) clearly supports this interpretation, and it is no coincidence that Wolff argues that Micah is not only thinking of the poor, but also of anyone else who refuses to accept the demands of the prophets; see Wolff, *Micah*, 103. Moreover, even if one accepts the more common translation of Mic 3:5c (“the one who puts nothing in their mouths”), this does not seem to undermine the validity of the argument.

⁶⁸ Hillers and Renaud rightly state that there is no pejorative meaning in the use of the terms divination/diviners, vision/seers in Mic 3:6–7, and Renaud holds that Micah refers to the older conception of prophecy; see Hillers, *Micah*, 46; Renaud, *Michée*, 64. Since all these *media* are now disavowed by YHWH, then the chiefs of Jacob and Israel have no possibility to receive answers (Mic 3:4). Moreover, some scholars argue that the roles of prophets, seers and diviners are interchangeable in this text, and point to a general mention of professional foreseers; see Wolff, *Micah*, 104; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 33. On the other hand, Andersen and Freedman argue that since the term “diviner” tends to have a negative meaning, its presence also influences the recurrence of the other two, so the accusation is aimed exclusively at forbidden techniques of divination, and not at prophecy *per se*; see Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 374.

3:8. It is a common interpretation that, in v.8, Micah himself reminds his faulty colleagues how a “true” prophet acts, namely by denouncing the sins of the community (להגיד ליעקב פשעו), “to declare to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin”).⁶⁹ However, two objections can challenge the assumption that the speaker in Mic 3:8 is necessarily a prophet. Firstly, Micah is never said to be a prophet (נביא) in the book;⁷⁰ secondly, the mention of the spirit of YHWH, which may support the presence of a prophet in this context, is suspected to be a later gloss. As regards this element, it must be considered that even if one assumes the sentence את־רוח יהוה to be original in the text, it does not imply that the speaker is a prophet, because “spirit” does not constitute an exclusive prerogative of prophetic gifts.⁷¹ It is clear that the statement in Mic 3:8 creates a contrast to the actions of prophets, seers and diviners who have been incapable of promoting redemption in Jacob and Israel. However, a prophetic voice is not implied, especially because the entire pericope Mic 3:5–8 revolves around the complete discharging of professional divination.

Determining the background of the claims of the anonymous speaker in Mic 3:8 exceeds our current knowledge of the origins and redactional stages of the book of Micah, but it seems safe to conclude that Mic 3:5–8 is more than likely a critique of divination and diviners, which does not necessarily come from a prophetic standpoint. The original oracle in Mic 3:1–4, 9–12 targets the injustice that is perpetrated by the upper classes (chiefs, leaders, judges, priests, prophets in vv.1, 9, 11); the later addition of Mic 3:5–8, on the other hand, targets only the professional diviners. The blaming is not aimed at some “false” prophets but at all those who

⁶⁹ See Allen, *Micah*, 313; Wolff, *Micah*, 104; Hillers, *Micah*, 46; Renaud, *Michée*, 65; Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 37; Achtemeier, *Minor Prophets I*, 321; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 376.

⁷⁰ As noticed by Carroll, only the books of Habakkuk, Haggai and Zechariah are, strictly speaking, attributed to prophets (Hab 1:1; Hag 1:1; Zech 1:1). Micah is never directly associated with the title נביא (not in MT nor in G), although the sentence “Micah of Moreshet, who prophesied” appears in a later passage, namely Jer 26:18; see Carroll, “Night without Vision”, 75. That Micah was not a “traditional” prophet (נביא) is also considered in Wolff’s commentary. Wolff starts from the fact that Micah was a native of Moreshet, who prophesied both there and in Jerusalem (Mic 1:15; 3:12). What brought him to Jerusalem (allegedly a 35 km trip), according to Wolff, was his main office as a local elder in Moreshet (because he acted as the leader of a clan), which pre-dates the call to prophecy bestowed on him. As evidence that Micah was a civil leader, Wolff proposes, a. Micah is not identified by a patronymic or a profession, but only by the name of his hometown; b. as an elder of his clan, Micah’s presence in Jerusalem from Moreshet can be part of his civil duty; c. the focus on social justice of most of his words is not a characteristic of prophecy, but of civil leadership; d. Micah generally says he is speaking on behalf of his people (e.g. the frequent expression עמי; Mic 1:9; 2:4, 8–9; 3:3, 5), who may be the inhabitants of Moreshet; see Wolff, *Micah*, 6–7. Wolff’s hypothesis of Micah as a “clan elder” may not be convincing, but it is the result of an evident problem in the book: Micah is never called “prophet”, and everything he says about prophets is negative. As regards this, Catastini notices that only Mic 2:6 may offer some redemption for the prophets as a class in Micah, but the verse is too corrupt to offer a clear interpretation. Moreover, in this verse the verb used is not נבא, but נטף, “to drip”, which only occasionally is a synonym of נבא; see Catastini, *Profeti e tradizione*, 55; see note 27 above.

⁷¹ This is a sound objection to the prophetic interpretation raised by Carroll, “Night Without Vision”, 80.

practice divination (prophets included), because they have been of no benefit to the community. Similar circumstances do not reflect the same context and dynamics of the blaming of the prophets in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but it seems certain that the book of Micah shares their anti-prophetic attitude, and even more significantly, it expresses it with the same terminology.⁷²

4. Textual Relations between Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah

As said above, many thematic and textual connections are highlighted between Mic 3:5–8 and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The *media* of divination in Mic 3:6 are identified with the terms חֲזוֹן, “visions”, and קֶסֶם, “divination”, as seen in Jeremiah (Jer 14:14; 23:16; 27:9; 29:8) and Ezekiel (Ezek 13:6–9). Besides, these terms also appear in Mic 3:7 in the form of substantives (חֲזִיִּים, “seers”, and קֶסָמִים, “diviners”). Moreover, the presence of the term שְׁלוֹם clearly connects the message of the prophets in Mic 3:5 to the opponents of Jeremiah (Jer 6:13–15; 14:14; 23:17) and Ezekiel (Ezek 13:10). One of the key-terms of this leitmotif, שֶׁקֶר, is here absent, because the text does not aim to present their utterances as being false or as creating a contrast between a “true” message and a “false” one. The targets here are all those who give divinatory responses, whose questionable results are always influenced by the compensation that they received. There is little doubt that Mic 3:5–8 represents yet another expression of the strand that accuses

⁷² It seems that this text reflects a period of crisis and general distrust about prophecy as a charismatic office, of which also Zech 13:2–6 may be an example. Some scholars have connected this crisis with the rise of “false” prophecy (especially in the form of prophecies of salvation for Jerusalem before the Babylonian invasion), which forced the people to lose faith in the prophets; see Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 111; Hossfeld & Meyer, *Prophet Gegen Prophet*, 162–63; De Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet*, 144–47. However, as Auld, Carroll, Garbini and Gonçalves have argued, in the prophetic tradition there is only a late positive use of the title נְבִיא, which implies a previous, well-established climate of distrust of prophecy (and divination) of which texts such as Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 23:9–32; Ezek 13:1–11a; Mic 3:5–8; Zech 13:2–6 are evidently expression; see Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass”, 3–23; Carroll, “Poets not Prophets”, 25–31; Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 114–17; Gonçalves, “Les ‘prophètes écrivains’”, 145. All these passages attack the prophets *per se*, and only a few later texts may imply a conflict between “true” and “false” prophets (Jer 19:14–20:6; 27–29). Any dating of this shift is conjectural but given the focus on the fall of Jerusalem and the secondary origins of most of the texts that have been considered so far, it could hardly pre-date the Persian period (which represents only a *terminus a quo*). If anything, the crisis of prophecy was not caused by the contrast between “true” and “false” prophets, but the literary theme of “prophesying falsehood” probably emerged to express the hostility towards all the members of the prophetic class.

the prophets of promising peace; what remains to establish is the kind of textual relation that connects this text with those found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

When comparing all the passages that accuse the prophets of promising peace, the first element to be considered is the diachronic aspect. If only the oldest appearances of this motif in each book are compared (Jer 6:13–15; Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a; Mic 3:5–8), a first observation is that the books of Ezekiel and Micah share more elements between them than with Jer 6:13–15. In fact, both in Ezekiel and Micah, shared terminology is found as regards the *media* of divination (Ezek 13:6, 9; Mic 3:6–7), while the only element that connects Micah to Jer 6:13–15 is the catchword שלום. Moreover, the blaming of the prophets in Mic 3:5–8 resembles Jer 14:13–16, which is one of the models for Ezek 13:13, 6, 9–11a (the other being Jer 6:13–15).⁷³ Given such circumstances, there are only three possibilities to account for the textual relations that connect Jer 14:13–16, Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a and Mic 3:5–8. The first one is that Jer 14:13–16 was the model for both Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a and Mic 3:5–8; this means that the redactors who were responsible for the motif of promising peace in Ezekiel and Micah independently drew from Jeremiah. The second one is that Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a represents the direct model for Mic 3:5–8; this means that the development of this motif in prophetic literature goes from Jeremiah (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16) to Ezekiel (Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a), and finally from Ezekiel to Micah. The third and last solution is that Mic 3:5–8 represents the model for Jer 14:13–16, which eventually served as the model for Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a; in this case, the development goes from Micah to Jeremiah, and from Jeremiah to Ezekiel.

However, given the results of the comparison between Jeremiah and Ezekiel,⁷⁴ it seems self-evident that the third possibility must be rejected and Mic 3:5–8 cannot be considered the source for Jer 14:13–16. The internal development of the book of Jeremiah does not allow for this possibility (as was the case for Ezekiel, also in Micah the blaming of the prophets is not inserted in the context of the fall of Jerusalem, which represents the true essence of this strand in Jeremiah, from its first appearance in Jer 6:13–15). However, there are scholars who have taken the books of Jeremiah and Micah at face value, and have held that an attack on the “false” prophets was originally voiced by the “historical” Micah, which later inspired the “historical” Jeremiah to speak out against the prophets of his times.⁷⁵ Similar arguments, which rely heavily

⁷³ See Section 7 in ch. 3.

⁷⁴ See Section 7 in ch. 3.

⁷⁵ Such positions have been expressed by Mays, who considers Mic 3:5 to be a direct source for “but there is no peace” in Jer 6:14. Mays takes these words, which he attributes to the “historical” Micah, to be a source of inspiration for the “historical” Jeremiah when he confronted the “false” prophets of his times; see Mays, *Micah*,

on biblical chronology and on prophetic conflicts as a social phenomenon, can no longer be sustained.⁷⁶ In this analysis, the field of investigation has been cleared of troublesome notions such as the “historical” prophets, and only the texts have been considered; the textual evidence points out that the editorial development of the blaming of the prophets is part of a redactional process which started in the book of Jeremiah, and that affected the books of Ezekiel and Micah only in later times.

Similarly, also the second possibility (namely, that Ezekiel is the model of Micah) must be rejected. In fact, further contextual analogies can be traced between Mic 3:5–8 and the book of Jeremiah, which on the other hand are nowhere to be found in Ezekiel. These similarities are found in Jer 23:9–40, so they are not limited to the blaming of the prophets for having promised false peace (a theme that is confined in Jer 23:16–17, 21–22; 23:25–27, 30–32).⁷⁷ Firstly, the expression that opens the accusations aimed at the prophets in Mic 3:5 (עַל־הַנְּבִיאִים, “concerning the prophets”) is analogous to that of Jer 23:9, which serves the same introductory purposes (לְנָבִיאִים, “about the prophets, in Jer 23:9). Secondly, the expression הַמְתַּעִים אֶת־עַמִּי, “[the prophets] who cause my people to err” in Mic 3:5a, matches the same accusation aimed at the prophets of Samaria in Jer 23:13 and is even found in the general blaming of the prophetic class in Jer 23:32 (וַיְתַּעֲוּ אֶת־עַמִּי, “[the prophets] cause my people to err”), which uses a different form of the verb תַּעַה, “to err”. Thirdly, the targets of the accusations in Mic 3:5–8 are represented by all those who practice foretelling (in the forms of prophecy, vision and divination). This terminology has no equivalent in Jer 23 (excluding the term חֲזוֹן, in 23:16), but Jer 23:9–32 like Mic 3:5–8 reads as a general attack on all the prophets, caused by their detrimental activity in regards of the people (Jer 23:13–14, 17, 22, 32). In a similar way, Mic 3:5–8 accuses all the diviners because they have not denounced the sins of Israel and Jacob (Mic 3:8), and in doing so they favoured the corruption of the people. It seems that both Jer 23:9–32 and Mic 3:5–8

85. Similarly, also Allen, *Micah*, 312; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 51; Alfaro, *Justice and Loyalty*, 34. In his extended analysis of the relation between Micah and Jeremiah, Cha reaches the conclusion that Jeremiah’s attack on the false prophets derives entirely from Micah. According to Cha, the “historical” Jeremiah reused part of Micah’s repertoire during his prophetic career, which he knew mostly through oral transmission. Therefore, he argues that Micah is Jeremiah’s direct predecessor; see Cha, *Micah und Jeremia*, 59–76; for the message of שְׁלוֹם in Mic 3:5 and Jer 6:14, see especially 73–75.

⁷⁶ It should be noted that few scholars have considered the relation between the books of Micah and Jeremiah extensively, and no one has ever presented a thorough redactional analysis. It seems that Jeremiah’s dependence on Micah is always accepted *a priori*, by taking at face value the existence of the prophets behind the books. Clear examples of this tendency are Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 44, 51; Cha, *Micah und Jeremia*, 131; Andersen & Freedman, *Micah*, 44.

⁷⁷ See Section 3.5 in ch. 2.

focus on the role of the prophets (and seers and diviners) in the community and highlight the social context in their accusations.

If a direct relation between Micah and Jeremiah as regards the blaming of the prophets for promising peace must be indicated, it seems that Jer 23:9–32 overall needs to be considered, along with other expressions of this motif, such as Jer 6:13–15 and 14:13–16. Moreover, given the adaptation of the same theme and context in Mic 3:5–8, it seems correct to consider that the blaming of the prophets in Micah echoes similar materials in Jeremiah, and does not allude to just one specific passage in Jeremiah. In fact, this link may not appear too strong, but there are sufficient elements to assume that the author responsible for Mic 3:5–8 had Jeremiah in mind (at least Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 23:9–32) when he decided to attack the prophets and present them as those who can promise either “peace” or “war” according to the payment they receive.

In conclusion, it appears that the book of Jeremiah represents the source for the attack on the diviners in Mic 3:5–8, but this case is evidently of a different kind when compared to the one of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in which a textual connection was established through direct quotations and explicit allusions. In fact, the passage Mic 3:5–8 shares only a few terms with Jer 14:13–16 and 23:9–40; however, the presence of the catchword “peace” cannot fail to ascribe these texts to the same literary motif. The most significant difference between Micah and the other occurrences of the promises of peace is represented by the context in which these accusations occur. Given that the passage Mic 3:5–8 represents an attack on all those who practice foretelling, the context is clearly far from that of the fall of Jerusalem or the Babylonian invasion. Besides, also the term “peace” is not used in Micah to create a binary contrast with the forthcoming destruction. Between Micah and Jeremiah, only a few elements allow the reader to establish a connection with the polemic about the prophets in Jeremiah, so, if anything, it seems suitable to consider Mic 3:5–8 as an echo of this diatribe.

5. Promises of Peace in Micah – Final Remarks

In Micah, the promises of peace that were proclaimed by the prophets appear in the secondary Mic 3:5–8 and show a noteworthy amount of shared vocabulary with the books of

Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It seems clear that the same *leitmotif* is represented in these three prophetic books when the prophets are accused of promising peace to the people. The paternity of this strand clearly belongs to the book of Jeremiah; however, unlike the textual relations between Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in which two passages from the former (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16) are identified as the models for the one in the latter (Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a), the pericope Mic 3:5–8 is based on different materials in Jeremiah, which are only partially connected to the motif of promising peace. It appears evident that the catchword שלום reprises the texts in Jeremiah (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16; 23:16–17, 21–22). Nonetheless, the attack on all the diviners in Micah also draws from the general polemic about the prophets in Jer 23:9–40, as the recurrence of shared vocabulary points out (e.g. Jer 23:9, 13, 32).

Finally, also the use of this motif in a different context sets Mic 3:5–8 apart from Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The attack on prophecy is not framed within the Babylonian invasion, and the promises of peace are not used to assimilate the prophets with those responsible for the demise of Jerusalem (although this theme appears in a separate unit, Mic 3:12). Departing from the reference to the greediness of the prophets in the core of Mic 3 (Mic 3:11), the accusations aimed at the prophetic class were inserted to support a polemic about all the professional diviners. The theme of “false” prophecy does not appear relevant in Mic 3:5–8 because its author does not compare the sayings of Micah to those of the false prophets but accuses divination of being inadequate to inspire redemption in the community and sanctions YHWH’s rejection of it in the future.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This long discussion about promising (false) peace in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah through the lenses of redaction criticism has reached conclusions on two different levels, and it seems appropriate to summarize the results of this research accordingly. On the one hand, the present study has investigated the literary trajectory of this motif and its transmission from its first appearance in the book of Jeremiah to its later appearances in the books of Ezekiel and Micah. In addition, the ideologies of the redactors who have reused the promises of peace have been examined, and this second trajectory allowed us to address the vexed questions about the so-called “false” prophets and the characteristics of prophetic conflicts in biblical prophetic literature.

Promises of Peace: Origins, Development and Transmission

As regards the literary origins and development of this motif, it has been shown how the first mention of the false promises of peace is found in the core of the book of Jeremiah (the “foe from the North” cycle), namely in Jer 6:13–15, a passage that was later inserted almost identically in Jer 8:10b–12. This passage was originally meant to connect some promises of peace uttered by the entire religious class (the priests and the prophets, in Jer 6:13) to the fall of Jerusalem, for which only the temple officials were held responsible. In Jer 8:10b–12, the same words were adapted to a different context and were used to reinforce accusations against the scribes and the wise men for having subverted YHWH’s *tōrāh*. The accusation of falsehood aimed at the religious class in Jer 6:13–15 was reprised in the later Jer 5:30–31. These verses seemingly intended to redeem the priests from the allegations of falsehood, which were

exclusively aimed at the prophets (הַנְּבִיאִים נְבִאָה בְּשֶׁקֶר, “the prophets prophesy falsehood”, in Jer 5:31). The priests were on the other hand accused of having followed the prophets in their evildoing and were probably unwilling victims of circumstance. These accusations were reprised then in Jer 14:13–16, although this passage does not technically belong the “foe from the North” materials (Jer 4:5–6:30). Most probably triggered by the mention of “sword, famine and plague” in Jer 14:12, the secondary layer Jer 14:13–16 once again presents a false promise of peace, which was uttered only by the prophets alone, while the priests were not mentioned (Jer 14:13). Shared terminology connects this passage to Deut 18:18–22, which presents some criteria to establish when prophecy is legitimate. The criterion of divine appointment seen in Deut 18:18–20 is employed in Jer 14:13–16 to explain the falsehood of the prophets. YHWH in fact never told the prophets his words, nor commanded them to speak, therefore, whatever they may have said was nothing but the falsehood and the delusion of their minds (Jer 14:14–15). The omission of the priests along with these new details that explain the falsehood of the prophetic class represent two innovations in the motif first seen in Jer 6:13–15. As regards this, a new priestly class may have emerged in the Persian period (probably in connection with some group of returnees), and eventually may have gained control over the temple, the cult and the literary production therein. The new priests may even have intervened directly to eliminate the involvement of the priests in the destruction of Jerusalem, and in so doing they may have left this burden on the shoulders of the prophets alone.¹

Therefore, Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 14:13–16 together are the nucleus of the blaming of the prophets for promising peace and they serve as the source materials for the following adaptations in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah. Moving forward with the book of Jeremiah, two parallel developments can be found in this book. Firstly, the promises of peace have been inserted in a long list of accusations aimed at the prophets in Jer 23:9–40. This text has often been described as the “historical” Jeremiah’s most insightful attack on his fellow prophets,² but the redactional analysis has suggested that Jer 23:9–40 is rather a pastiche of heterogeneous materials later brought together around a common theme. However, not every unit in Jer 23:9–40 deals exclusively with prophets or prophecy (Jer 23:9–12 only mentions priests and prophets along with other generic evildoers in the land; Jer 23:33–40 does not single out the prophets but

¹ See Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116. See the discussion about Jer 14:13–16 in Section 2.4.2 in ch. 2 and the historical reconstruction as regards the returns from Babylon in Section 5 of ch. 3.

² This interpretation is omnipresent in commentaries; see Laetsch, *Jeremiah*, 196; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 154; Cunliffe-Jones, *Jeremiah*, 160; Overholt, *Falsehood*, 49; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 192; J. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 493; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 625; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 302; Craigie et alii, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 334ff; Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 215; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 260.

expresses YHWH's disdain for the people because of their disobedience). Only two units in Jer 23:9–40 appear to reuse the stereotypical motif of promising peace and prophesying falsehood seen elsewhere in the book, namely Jer 23:16–17, 21–22 and 23:25–27, 30–32. Both these excerpts give a new interpretation of the prophets' promises of peace and of their falsehood. The context is not that of the fall of Jerusalem, and the aim is not to hold the prophetic class responsible for that event. In these two instances, the motif has a social connotation and is meant to denounce the prophets on account of their collusion with the evildoers, to whom they make a promise of peace and swear that punishment will not come (שלום יהיה לכם, “there will be peace to you”, and לא תבוא עליכם רעה, “evil will not come upon you”, in Jer 23:17). Besides, it is also used to accuse the prophets of having exploited the word of YHWH and having caused the people to wander (Jer 23:30–32). Therefore, a first development of the motif seen in the foe from the North consists of accusations aimed at the prophets because they disregarded their social role and deceived the community in Judah.

The second development is found in the cycle Jer 27–29 and in its later expressions recurring in Jer 19:14–20:6 and 37:19. The context in these passages is that of the Babylonian invasion, and the prophets are generally portrayed as those who promised to the king and the people that Nebuchadnezzar would never conquer Judah (Jer 27:9–10, 12–15); however, there are other recurring themes, such as rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar (27:8, 13), the return of the temple vessels (Jer 27:16; occasionally with King Jeconiah and the exiles, Jer 28:4) and the forthcoming destruction of Babylon (Jer 28:3, 11). The theme of blaming the prophets is used to keep together these three chapters as a uniform section which deals with different topics, but it generally revolves around the relationship between Judah and Babylon. The analysis has shown that each passage that accuses the prophets in Jer 27–29 is part of a concluding redactional stage that shaped Jer 27–29 into a uniform literary section, which may have been circulated independently before becoming part of the book.³ The final redactor of this cycle presented different views as regards the Babylonian invasion and the role that YHWH had in it. A peculiar point of view holds that the invasion and the exile were part of YHWH's plan for the people, and it is presented as the “word of Jeremiah”, in contrast to other views which are attributed to the “false” prophets. The contrast with other prophetic characters is however instrumental in emphasizing the authority of the prophet of the book, and in simultaneously supporting the redactors' claims.⁴ The framework of the fall of Jerusalem from the original

³ As suggested by Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 523; Jones, *Jeremiah*, 346; Scalise *et alii*, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 34.

⁴ As regards this, see Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 181-97.

motif (Jer 6:13–15; 14:13–16) has been maintained, but the aim is not simply to accuse the prophets of being responsible for the event, but rather to engage in a debate about the significance of said event, and to support a specific stance (namely that the exile was a theological necessity) under the authority of Jeremiah. The same pattern can be observed in the dispute between Jeremiah and Pashhur in Jer 19:14–20:6, in which Jeremiah clashes with the superintendent of the temple and foresees his deportation and death in Babylon.

As we see, quite a clear development of this peculiar blaming of the prophets can be traced in the book of Jeremiah, but similar accusations are seen also in Ezekiel and Micah. In Ezekiel, the prophets are accused of having promised peace and of having experienced empty visions, because there was no peace (Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a). In Micah, the prophets are said to give omens of *shalom* to whoever pays their fee but promise war against those who refuse to support them (in Mic 3:5–8). The presence of shared terminology and context points to some sort of literary dependency between these books. Since all that is said of the prophets in Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a appears in Jer 14:13–16 (plus a direct quotation of Jer 6:14 in Ezek 13:10), it seems safe to assume that the author of the core of Ezek 13 intentionally alluded to the book of Jeremiah when presenting his accusations against the prophets of Israel (Ezek 13:2). In addition, in Ezek 13, the motif has been adapted to justify the exclusion of the prophets of Israel from the temple in Yehudit Jerusalem (the Persian period is *terminus a quo*). It is significant that the earliest additions to the core of Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a were all meant to emphasize the connection to Jeremiah (Ezek 13:5 for the fall of Jerusalem; Ezek 13:7 for YHWH's disavowal), meaning that the original allusion was evidently clear to the readers. By reusing the stereotypical blaming seen in Jeremiah, the prophets in Ezekiel were immediately associated with those who caused the fall of Jerusalem, so that their exclusion from the community and the temple appeared justified.

Likewise, the blaming of the prophets in Micah is based on the materials found in Jeremiah. Nonetheless, Micah presents some peculiarities, and the links may not seem as evident as those between Jeremiah (6:13–15; 14:13–16) and Ezekiel (13:1–11a). Common vocabulary in Jeremiah and Mic 3:5–8 is noteworthy but limited (e.g. peace, vision, divination). Moreover, the context in which the prophets are accused of promising peace in Micah does not point to the fall of Jerusalem nor to the Babylonian invasion. The prophets are accused of having been detrimental for the community, because of their tendency to say to their customers whatever pleased them, in order to obtain compensation. In fact, they provide good or bad omens only according to the fee they receive and cannot correct the wrongdoings of the people. It appears

that Mic 3:5–8, rather than targetting some deviant prophets, presents an attack on professional foretellers (prophets, seers, diviners), whose gifts will soon be abandoned by YHWH (Mic 3:6–7). Given some similarities in context and phrasing, it appears that literary connections between Jer 23:9–32 and Mic 3:5–8 can be found, although the result is just an echo of Jeremiah’s promises of peace in Micah. In fact, both Mic 3:5–8 and especially Jer 23:9–32 address the faults of the prophetic class in the community. The diviners in Micah have been ineffective in correcting the chiefs of Jacob and Israel, because they did not expose their sins, but reassured them by promising peace in exchange for a good fee (Mic 3:5–8, 9–12). Similarly, the oracles in Jer 23:9–32 always present the prophets as being detrimental to the good people in the land, as they collude constantly with groups of evildoers (Jer 23:9–12, 13–15), to which they promise that peace is forthcoming, and evil will never come (Jer 23:16–17).

The literary trajectory of the motif has been established through redactional and comparative analyses and has reached a solid conclusion. The motif is original in Jeremiah, and under the influence of Jeremiah, later redactors have inserted it (*mutatis mutandis*) in Ezekiel and Micah. As regards this, quite a different picture is inferred from the biblical chronology. According to the tradition, Micah, who was active in the middle of the eighth century, was the first to speak against other prophets. At least one hundred and fifty years later (in the sixth century), Jeremiah reprised and actualized his words to accuse other members of the prophetic class, with whom he was quarrelling. Similarly, Ezekiel, right before the first deportation (597), heard Jeremiah preaching in Jerusalem and found his message against the lies of the prophets to be relevant to his own times and renewed it while in exile. This traditional view can safely be dismissed in favour of a more critical interpretation, which considers exclusively the exegetical work of the redactors who have transmitted this motif and evades the problematic task of evaluating the contributions (if any) of the “historical” prophets to their own books.

The “False” Prophets

Biblical scholarship has generally taken the adversaries of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah to be members of a homogenous prophetic group (the “false” prophets), under the assumption that the “writing” prophets (“true” prophets appointed by YHWH) were also called to rebuke their own class. Therefore, scholars have supposed that prophetic conflicts were a socio-historical phenomenon in ancient Israel, of which the Bible bears witness. However, the

analysis of the redactors' ideologies forced us to question and eventually abandon such conceptions.

No criteria to separate “true” and “false” prophets. This is not a new element, as many scholars have already questioned the idea of a set of standardized criteria that could objectively help to distinguish “true” from “false” prophecy.⁵ All the passages that have been examined in this study demonstrate that there is no clear line between Jeremiah, Ezekiel or Micah as prophets and the other “false” prophets. The falsehood of these prophets is occasionally connected to forbidden *media* of foreseeing (especially חֲזֹן, “divination”), but nothing in these books seems to imply that the status of the “false” prophets derives from the techniques they use. In fact, the “false” prophets are also associated with legitimate means of knowing YHWH's will, such as visions and dreams. In one excerpt (Jer 14:13–16), falsehood is explained because YHWH never appointed them as his prophets, so they are not speaking in his name and their visions and divination are worthless. It appears that the problem is not in the techniques they use, but in the sources that they trust. This may be taken as the only common criterion to separate prophets, as is found frequently in Jeremiah (Jer 23:21–22, 32; 27:15; 28:15; 29:9) and in Ezekiel (Ezek 13:6–9). However, it does not appear in Micah, in which the divine origins of prophetic messages, along with divination and visions, is never questioned. If anything, the passages considered in this study are meant to reject the fact that the prophets' mind serves as a legitimate source of foreseeing (Jer 14:14–15; Ezek 13:6–9) or to predict the end of prophecy and divination because such practices never truly helped the community (Mic 3:7–8).

Moreover, even if we accept that the “true” prophet is the one appointed by YHWH, this fact does not solve our problem, but simply shifts the judgement on another element of uncertainty, because we now wonder how the people could understand which prophets were chosen, since also “false” prophets were often said to be speaking in the name of YHWH. Given the inclination of the people to do the opposite of what Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah say, tracing a dividing line between “false” and “true” becomes an even more arduous task. To solve this impasse, Deuteronomy proposes the criterion of fulfilment (Deut 18:18–22), which however is never employed in Jeremiah,⁶ Ezekiel and Micah and simply multiplies the

⁵ See Sections 2 and 3 in ch. 1 of the current study.

⁶ The criterion of fulfilment appears in Jer 28 but is quickly dismissed, because when Hananiah prophesies that within two years Babylon will be destroyed, Jeremiah accuses him of being prophesying falsehood way before his words could rightfully be tested (Jer 28:15–17).

questions as to its validity as a means to assess the differences between “true” and “false” prophecy”.⁷ It seems clear that the texts covered in this study are not concerned with the categories of “true” and “false” prophets, and one cannot help but suspect that the redactors were actually not familiar with this differentiation at all.

The shalom or optimistic prophets. Sometimes, the “false” prophets are grouped on the basis of their message.⁸ In Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah much emphasis is put on their message of peace, by stating that the “false” prophets’ words are overly optimistic in times of crisis. Besides, even this study acknowledges that the connection between Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah is found in the use of the catchword שלום, “peace”. However, peace is the message of the prophets in Ezekiel (Ezek 13:10) and Micah, although here they can also speak of “war” (Mic 3:5). The case is not as simple in Jeremiah, where the prophets have several and contradictory messages. Finally, “false” prophecy happens to be paired with oracles of doom (Jer 28), so this definition is not accurate, and “false” prophets cannot be grouped as or reduced to *shalom* prophets.

Falsehood and circular reasoning. There are problems with the label “false prophets”, and not simply because the Masoretic text never uses it. One first problem is that in these texts the “falsehood” of the prophets is not explained at all. The reader is told several times that these prophets have spoken false divination and seen false visions, because they have trusted their minds and have not been appointed by YHWH, but no further comment appears besides their punishment. These prophets are false by definition, and there is no escaping this circular reasoning, because essentials notions such as how prophets are appointed or how they could distinguish between divine words and figments of their imagination is never explained, nor is it addressed. The real problem with the label, however, is that on some occasions “false” prophets show an odd inclination to speak the truth. In Jer 28, Hananiah simply promises that Babylon will be destroyed in two years, but Jeremiah dismisses his words and predicts his death way before that date. By the time Hananiah speaks, he might be right or wrong, but he is not saying falsehood. Similarly, in Jer 29, Shemaiah the Nehelamite reports a previous message of Jeremiah, therefore he cannot be lying, but yet he is branded a “false” prophet (he was not even a prophet, but we will come to this later). In Jer 20, Pashhur (another adversary who is not

⁷ An insightful and detailed discussion as regards why fulfilment could not determine the value of a predictive statement is found in Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, 29-37; see also Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 49-52.

⁸ Overholt states that an over-confident message is the main characteristic of “false” prophecy; see Overholt, *Falsehood*, 3-23. Similarly, McKane commonly uses the label “*shalom* prophets” for the adversaries of Jeremiah; see McKane, *Jeremiah vol.1*, 147, 327, 579.

called “prophet”) does not even say a word, yet again, he is accused of having prophesied falsehood, and deportation and death are promised to him. Even more surprisingly, the prophets in Mic 3:5–8 are never said to be speaking or prophesying falsehood. Evidently, the accusations of falsehood against the prophets in these books are much more stereotypical and cliché than it may seem. In the book of Jeremiah, “false” prophets happen to be all those who, being prophets or not, dare to contradict the prophet of the book.

Accusations against all the prophets. It should be considered that most of these passages are spoken by anonymous voices, which can be identified with those of the prophets of the books only from the general context. This is true especially for the first mentions of the promises of peace in the “foe from the North” cycle (Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12; 14:13–16), the long accusations aimed at the prophets in Jer 23:9–40 and the attack on divination in Mic 3:5–8. Conversely, Jeremiah appears as an active character and is widely addressed as “Jeremiah the prophet” in Jer 19:14–20:6; 27–29; 37:19. Ezekiel is presented as the addressee of a word of YHWH with the expression, “son of man” (Ezek 13:1). Nevertheless, in the colophons of these books (Jer 1:1; Ezek 1:1; Mic 1:1), Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah are not called “prophets”.

None of the texts here presented require a prophetic speaker to be understood, because they target all the prophetic class. To be more precise, at least Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12 are an attack on the religious class, and not simply on the prophets. Other texts, such as Jer 14:13–16; 23:16–17, 21–22, 25–32; Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a;⁹ Mic 3:5–8 target all the prophetic class (Micah even more broadly than Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and never provide a comparison between good and bad prophets. It is interesting to note that as we do not have a clear depiction of “false” prophets in these texts, we do not have a model for the “true” ones either. As said above, this division does not appear as a concern of the redactors, whose aim was not to make distinctions, but to accuse all the prophets.

Therefore, the results of the textual analyses support the views held by Carroll and Garbini, namely that the distinction between “true” and “false” prophets is artificial and secondary, and not originally implied in prophetic books, which mostly present distinctive anti-prophetic attitudes.¹⁰ Likewise, also Auld’s suggestion that the title of נביא in the prophetic tradition is part of a later reinterpretation helps us to understand the redactional processes that culminated

⁹ That the core Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a targets the entire prophetic class could be a matter for debate; it is difficult to ascertain if the prophets of Israel (Ezek 13:2) represent a specific group or the totality of this class.

¹⁰ See Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116; Carroll, “Poets not Prophets”, 25–31; “Whose Prophet?”, 33–49.

with the redemption of the prophetic class.¹¹ Once the tradition began to consider Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah as נבאים, the anti-prophetic attitude of the books needed explaining and new interpretations probably arose (one is clearly the division of that class into good and bad members).¹² However, the redactional analyses of all the texts that are generally considered part of the conflict between “true” and “false” prophets show that this interpretation is secondary, while originally, they were expression of an attack on the religious class in relation to the fall of Jerusalem (Jeremiah), later reused on the prophets of Israel, whoever they might be (Ezekiel), and final on every professional diviner (Micah). Some scholars have argued that “false” prophecy is the final symptom of the crisis of prophetic gifts,¹³ which later led the community to replace their trust in this *medium* with eschatology and apocalyptic literature.¹⁴ From this study, a different pattern emerges. Given the original distrust of prophets seen in the tradition, it appears that the rise of “false” prophets coincided with the redemption of the title of נביא and the creation of the tradition of the “writing” prophets. We can assume that only when authoritative figures like Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah became נבאים a division into virtuous and immoral prophets started to be implied.

Prophetic Conflicts as Ideological Conflicts

The nature of “true” and “false” prophecy and prophets has been drastically revised in this study, which leads inevitably to the reconsideration of prophetic conflicts as expressions of a social phenomenon. This conflict has generally been intended as a (“true”) prophet vs. other (“false”) prophets, but it has been demonstrated that this dichotomy is not feasible in most of the passages generally considered as part of prophetic conflicts, because they are simply anti-prophetic at their very core (especially Jer 5:30–31; 6:13–15; 8:10b–12; 14:13–16; 23:9–32; Ezek 13:1–11a; Mic 3:5–8). The only circumstances in which a prophet is explicitly attacking other prophets appear in Jer 19:14–20:6; 27–29; 37:19. These passages are part of a late

¹¹ See Auld, “Prophets Through the Looking Glass”, 3-23; also, Garbini, *History and Ideology*, 116.

¹² This shift in the significance of the term prophet, from negative to positive, has not interested exclusively prophetic books. In fact, later examples of a tradition about “Jeremiah the prophet” outside the book of Jeremiah are found in 2 Chr 36:12 and Dan 9:2.

¹³ See especially Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 62-76; Hossfeld & Meyer, *Prophet Gegen Prophet*, 162-63; De Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet*, 144-47.

¹⁴ As regards this shift, see Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 106-9; Carroll, “Ancient Israel Prophecy and Dissonance Theory”, *Numen* 24 (1977), 148-49; Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 32.

redactional stage in the book of Jeremiah, in which the prophet of the book is depicted as the highest authority for the community. In fact, he speaks in front of King Zedekiah and to foreign ambassadors in ch. 27, and to Hananiah in front of all the people and the priests in the temple in ch. 28. Moreover, he also gives advise to the diaspora in Babylon by sending letters in ch. 29.¹⁵ Many problems stand in the way of these chapters to be read as historical accounts,¹⁶ and when it comes to prophetic conflicts another interesting element can be highlighted.

Besides Hananiah, among the adversaries of Jeremiah, neither Pashhur (Jer 20), nor Ahab and Zedekiah, nor Shemaiah the Nehelamite (Jer 29) happen to be called or described as prophets, although they are accused of having prophesied falsehood. Redactional interventions can be isolated to show that the accusation of “prophesying falsehood” has been inserted later, *de facto* creating “prophetic antagonists” for Jeremiah, who eventually emerges as the true and only prophet and spiritual leader of the community. In fact, Jer 19:14–20:6 and the entire Jer 27–29 cycle have been carefully edited by reusing the vocabulary of the motif of promising peace, so they eventually show Jeremiah (significantly called “the prophet” throughout) to be superior to any other authorities. The work of the editors signals that prophetic conflicts are literary creations that serve a specific ideology, namely presenting Jeremiah as the embodiment of the word of YHWH. The brand of falsehood is instrumental in ideological conflicts, and the aim of the redactors is quite clear. By emphasizing the authority of Jeremiah, they build on his privileged relationship with YHWH in order to present their view of the Babylonian invasion and the exile as necessary evils; all the other views are then easily dismissed because they are supported by liars. According to the redactors, it is not important to explain why Pashhur, Hananiah, Ahab, Zedekiah and Shemaiah said falsehood (some of them did not, actually); it is already assumed they did, because in the book, Jeremiah is the only one who can speak the truth. It may seem that in this sense a dichotomy between “true” and “false” prophets can be upheld, but it should be considered that it is a product of the ideology of the redactors and that the book of Jeremiah does not describe the conflict in these terms; it would be misleading to

¹⁵ As regards the emergence of “Jeremiah the prophet” as a secondary development in the book of Jeremiah, see Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 55–64.

¹⁶ See Section 4.1 in ch. 2. The issue of the historicity of the Hebrew Bible is too long to be addressed here. A good assessment of the post-modernist shift in the conception of History, which moved forward from a positivistic conception of the discipline, is found in the collection edited by Grabbe, *Can a History of Israel be Written?* (JSOTSup 245; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997). Similarly, see Barstad, *History and the Hebrew Bible* (FAT 61; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Hjelm & T. Thompson (eds.), *History, Archaeology and the Bible Forty Years after Historicity: Changing Perspectives 6* (CIS; London, New York: Routledge, 2016). See notes 17–18 below.

use these terms because they are semantically connoted in Biblical Studies.¹⁷ The status of “prophecy” (true or false) is not very relevant in these texts, which are meant to present Jeremiah’ as being superior to everyone else, and have no interest in showing a generic “true” prophet who overcomes other generic “false” prophets.

History and Ideology. Prophetic conflicts have been too often approached from a “theological” point of view, meaning that their characteristics have been accepted as they appear in the theological (and therefore *ideological*) system proposed by the Hebrew Bible. Thus, some prophets are entitled to speak by YHWH himself, and only these should be followed; some others may pretend to be speaking in the name of the deity, but all they say is falsehood and the delusion of their imagination – these ought to be ignored. If the problem is posed in such terms, it can hardly be transposed within any social environment, because as we have seen, nobody would be able to distinguish between prophets based on such criteria. In order to resolve the problem, we would have to resort to the argument of faith, which questions the possibility of considering the conflicts between “true” and “false” prophets as accounts of a socio-religious phenomenon in ancient Israel. In recent decades, new theories of history have questioned the sharp distinction between fact (=true) and fiction (=not true) when dealing with history, historiography and history writing.¹⁸ A fictional story may contain some historical truths, and not all history books only contain facts.¹⁹ In ancient Palestine, or in Yehudit Jerusalem, prophets may have had their quarrels with other prophets, and maybe they were often seen arguing in the temple in front of priests and people. They may have claimed that only their message was true, or that only their prophecy would come to pass; likewise, they may have thought that the words of any other prophets were falsehood and the product of their imagination. These circumstances are definitely reasonable. Similar episodes may have inspired the editors to recreate prophetic conflicts in the book of Jeremiah, but there is little doubt that the accounts we read in Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Micah are literary creations, which were produced to present and support the redactors’ ideology. Nothing strictly “historical” as

¹⁷ See the literature review as regards “false” prophets and “false” prophecy in Section 3 in ch. 1.

¹⁸ Post-modernist epistemological questions as regards the nature of history and the possibility of history writing have challenged the old models of historiography. The positivistic assumption that historians can objectively understand the past has been increasingly attacked, and even the possibility of writing history at all has been questioned. A thorough assessment as regards the impact that the post-modernist crisis of historical science had and still has on the concept of historiography in Biblical Studies is found in Barstad, “History and the Hebrew Bible”, in Grabbe (ed.), *Can a History of Israel be Written?*, 37-65. This article, along with further of Barstad’s reflections on the same theme, has been collected in Barstad’s monograph, *History and the Hebrew Bible*.

¹⁹ This more fluid concept of narrative truth has replaced the positivistic and absolutist idea of a “scientific history”, which claimed to be able to separate in the sources the “true” elements from the “not true” and to restore a factual history; see Barstad, “History and the Hebrew Bible”, 63.

to the man Jeremiah or his involvement in the political climate of Judah in between 597 and 587 and the diaspora community afterwards could be reconstructed from these texts. A line must be drawn between biblical prophecy (a literary phenomenon of the Second Temple period) and ancient Hebrew prophecy (a cross-cultural phenomenon of the ancient Near East).²⁰ The former is fictional, the latter is part of the history of the Levant area; however, fictional must not be taken as implying “false” nor “counterfeit”, but it is rather a combination of fiction *and* history. Even in fiction, history could still appear on the surface, or be part of the framework, or even be hidden behind a façade of ideological constructions. In this case, the texts analysed in this study do not say much about the history of Judah before and after 587; however, despite the lack of detail, some elements as regards the ideological conflicts and concerns that interested (part of) the Hebrew community starting from the Persian period (such as, the significance of the fall of Jerusalem, the role of YHWH in that event, the exile, the place of the returnees in the land) could still be evaluated.

The Persian period (at least). In each analysis, some referents for the dating of these texts have been suggested, and they all point to the Persian period as the *terminus a quo* for their composition. Most of these passages offer very little information to allow for any certain dating. However, the constant references to the fall of Jerusalem seem to be a good hint that the motif of promising peace was conceived after the event. It is difficult to establish whether the prophetic class’ behaviour before the fall of Jerusalem influenced or were the source for the accusations, or if the promises of peace were simply part of the ideological propaganda which was meant to attack the religious class, and later only the prophets. Since the core of the book of Jeremiah comprises a series of reflections on the Babylonian invasion and the demise of the kingdom of Judah, which are explained as YHWH’s punishment for the wrongdoings of the people (Jer 4:5–6, 16–17),²¹ we can assume that a text such as Jer 6:13–15 may have become part of the book quite early in its formation. Likewise, for Jer 5:30–31 and 14:13–16. The year 587 stands as the *terminus post quem* for this motif, and the Persian period appears to be the most suitable context. It seems to us that any reflections as regards the fall of Jerusalem cannot be separated from the ideologies of exile and return. Only when the ideology of the “exile in Babylon”, which began with the empty land in 587 and ended with the edict of Cyrus

²⁰ See Nissinen, “The Historical Dilemma”, 108. As regards the relations between biblical and historical Israel, see also Kratz, “Myth and History: Reflections on the Relationship between Biblical History and the History of Israel”, in Hjelm & T. Thompson, *History, Archaeology and the Bible Forty Years after Historicity*, 35–46.

²¹ See Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 57–61.

in 539, became the foundational myth for the restored Israel, an ideological explanation (in the form of a theodicy) for the loss of the capital city was truly needed.²²

Other texts are then connected to the exile and the end of the deportation, which are intertwined with the dynamics of “return” and “settling” in the land (Jer 19:14–20:6; 27–29; Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a). In the cycle Jer 27–29, the Babylonian exile is seen as YHWH’s plan for Judah, meaning that those who endured it earned the favour of the deity and a privileged place in the land. This can easily be read as a claim of some group of returnees, who could use their captivity in Babylon as a political argument to justify their presence in the land. Similarly, the fact that Pashhur is punished by deportation and death in Babylon should be taken as an implicit reference to a possible return from captivity, although clearly not for him. The passage that however establishes the clearest connection with the ideology of return is Ezek 13:1–3, 6, 9–11a. The prophets of Israel (and implicitly whoever could be associated with them) are punished with exclusion from the community and the temple because they do not come back from Babylon (Ezra 2:62=Neh 7:64). Such punishment is rooted in the ideology of the exile as fixed period of captivity that the deportees endured until the edict of Cyrus.

However, the motif of promising peace in Jer 23:16–17, 21–22; 23:25–32 and Mic 3:5–8 is not directly connected with the fall of Jerusalem nor to the exile or the return but presents attacks on the prophets for their detrimental activity in the community. Scholars have often considered these passages to be the earliest mentions of the conflict between Jeremiah and Micah and the “false” prophets. This is far from the truth. It is impossible to date them with any degree of certainty but given their dependency on previous excerpts in the book of Jeremiah, these texts cannot predate the Persian period, like any other texts considered in this study.

In the end

Our lengthy discussion of promises of peace, falsehood, prophetic conflicts, and “true” and “false” prophets has reached its conclusion. There were no “false” prophets in the biblical tradition, but simply prophets, and as a religious group, apparently, they did not really

²² This is a point that both Carroll and Lemche rightly stress; see Carroll, “Exile! What Exile?”, 62-79; Lemche, “Exile as the Great Divide”, 13-27.

encounter the favour of the masses. When the term נביא gained prestige and was bestowed on charismatic figures of the tradition (and the “writing” prophets were created), some sort of internal division within the prophetic class certainly began to be implied. Nonetheless, a category such as “false” prophecy is inaccurate to describe this shift, as it suggests a strict dichotomy in prophecy according to two watertight compartments, each one with its own homogenous features. Although having been prominent in scholarship for decades, such a structure needs to be rethought and modified. Truth and falsehood are nothing but points of view, especially when it comes to prophecy and prediction. One person’s “false” prophet is another person’s “true” prophet. As the poet Dylan Thomas once said, “an alcoholic is someone you don’t like who drinks as much as you do”. We may paraphrase it as, “a ‘false’ prophet is someone you don’t like who prophesies in exactly the same way you do”.

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